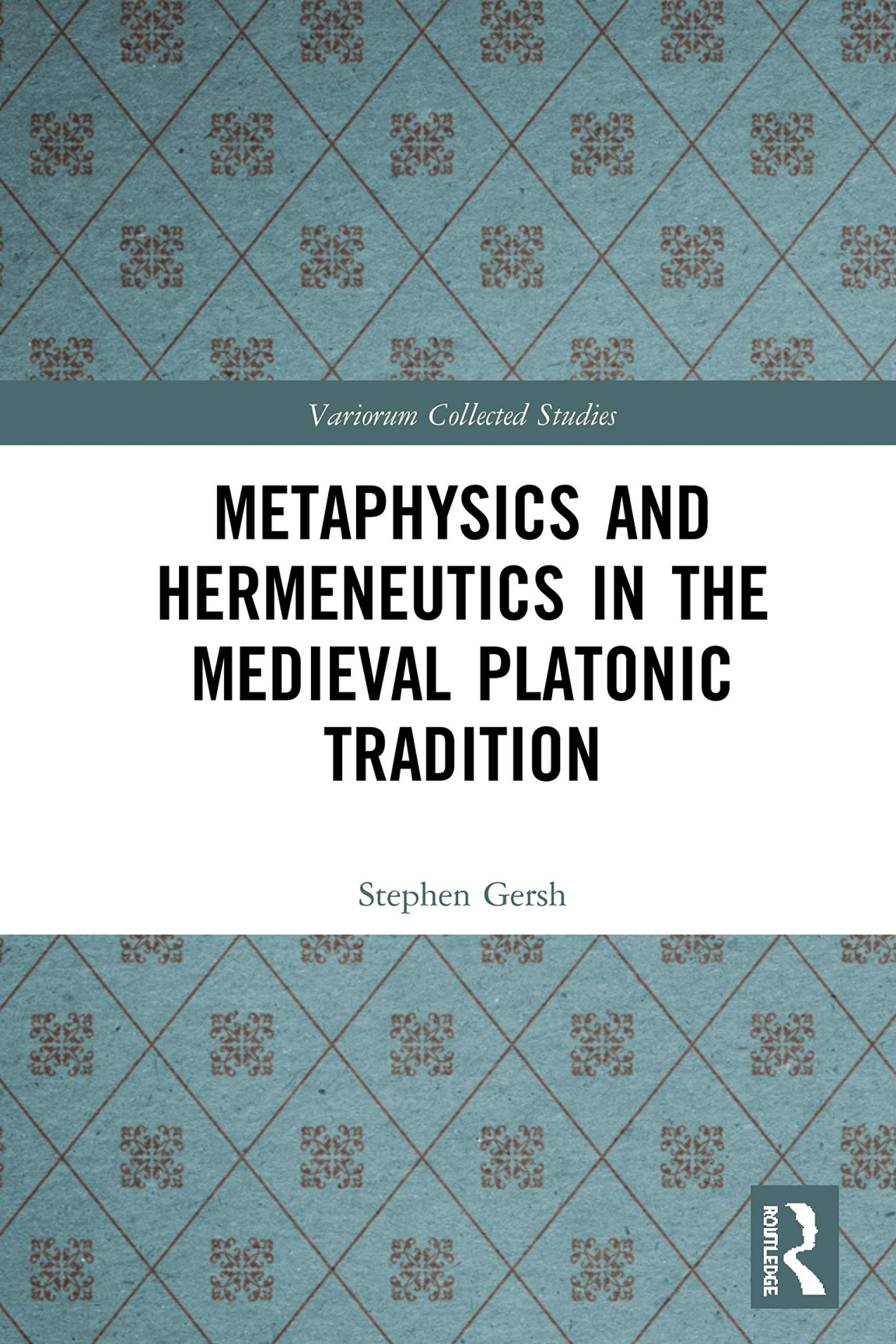
Variorum Collected Studies
METAPHYSICS AND HERMENEUTICS IN THE MEDIEVAL PLATONIC TRADITION
Stephen Gersh
ROUTLEDGE

Metaphysics and Hermeneutics in the Medieval Platonic Tradition

Metaphysics and Hermeneutics in the Medieval Platonic Tradition consists of twelve essays originally published between 2006 and 2015, dealing with main trends and specific figures within the medieval Platonic tradition.

Three essays provide general surveys of the transmission of late ancient thought to the Middle Ages with emphasis on the ancient authors, the themes, and their medieval readers, respectively. The remaining essays deal especially with certain major figures in the Platonic tradition, including pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, Iohannes Scottus Eriugena, and Nicholas of Cusa. The principal conceptual aim of the collection is to establish the primacy of hermeneutics within the philosophical program developed by these authors: in other words, to argue that their philosophical activity, substantially albeit not exclusively, consists of the reading and evaluation of authoritative texts. The essays also argue that the role of hermeneutics varies in the course of the tradition between being a means towards the development of metaphysical theory and being an integral component of metaphysics itself. In addition, such changes in the status and application of hermeneutics to metaphysics are shown to be accompanied by a shift from emphasizing the connection between logic and philosophy to emphasizing that between rhetoric and philosophy. The collection of essays fills in a lacuna in the history of philosophy in general between the fifth and the fifteenth centuries. It also initiates a dialogue between the metaphysical hermeneutics of medieval Platonism and certain modern theories of hermeneutics, structuralism, and deconstruction.

The book will be of special interest to students of the classical tradition in Western thought, and more generally to students of medieval philosophy, theology, history, and literature.

Stephen Gersh is Emeritus Professor of Medieval Studies at the University of Notre Dame, USA.

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INTRODUCTION

The origins of what might be called "the dynamic relation between metaphysics and hermeneutics" and which forms the primary subject matter of the present volume are buried in the mists of history. Nevertheless, the phenomenon is fully visible at the point where the Stoic allegorical technique that had developed during the Hellenistic era of antiquity was adopted by the Platonists. How much further back the twofold root of metaphysics and hermeneutics can be traced remains an open question, given that the problem itself is of a hermeneutical and perhaps even metaphysical nature and given that we can never escape from this circularity. But we can at least conclude that much prominent metaphysical thinking from the early Christian period onwards is articulated to a large degree within a kind of fourfold conceptual or semantic structure. Here, the general hermeneutical relation between Christian and pagan doctrine may be seen as enfolding more specific hermeneutical relations between the New and Old Testaments and between Aristotle and Plato.

That there is a parallelism or analogy between metaphysical and hermeneutic structures is openly acknowledged by certain thinkers: for instance, in the writings of Origen, we find an explicit parallelism between the hermeneutical dichotomy of spiritual and literal senses of Scripture and the metaphysical dichotomy of soul and body and in the writings of Proclus' philosophical school an explicit parallelism between four exegetical questions regarding a Platonic dialogue and the Aristotelian four causes of a physical body. However, the present volume sets out to demonstrate two further facts concerning the philosophy of these thinkers and their ideological successors, the medieval Platonists, that are less obvious: first, that there is a parallelism or analogy between metaphysics and hermeneutics that is not just a relatively static situation but an *active synergy* between the two modes of thought; second, that the traditional partnership between *logic* and metaphysics is shifted in the direction of a partnership between *rhetoric* and metaphysics.[1]

1 It is a well-established fact that, from late antiquity and through the medieval period, rhetoric itself overlaps more and more with hermeneutics and indeed sometimes becomes indistinguishable from it: for example, in the case of sermons. On the general issue see George A. Kennedy, *A New History of Classical Rhetoric* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994).

Now, hermeneutics in the philosophical domain is inherently a *relation between* one thinker who represents the reader of a text and another who stands for the "text" that is read as well as being possibly a reader of a further text. This fact is particularly important with respect to the current project because the dynamic relation between hermeneutics and metaphysics mentioned is brought into greater relief as soon as we investigate a *tradition* of thought – *i.e*. Platonism, *Neo*-Platonism, medieval Platonism, and so forth – rather than attempt to study a single thinker in isolation – *e.g*. Plotinus or Augustine. To take an obvious example, the original "Theory of Forms" was a metaphysical doctrine founded on logic. However, the Theory of Forms as derived by Boethius from Plato via Plotinus and Augustine and elaborated at length in his *On the Consolation of Philosophy* is a metaphysical doctrine that has been invaded by hermeneutical criteria and repositioned on the borderline between logic and rhetoric.

The twelve essays in this volume were all published between 2006 and 2015 and contribute in various ways to the understanding of the chosen topic.[2] When the first essays were written, the topic itself was only partially articulated, whereas some of the later pieces were composed with a more conscious awareness of its ramifications. For this reason, it seemed best to supplement the original texts with an introduction that is more fully developed than would normally be the case with a collective volume and indeed adopts a certain *meta-critical* stance. Apart from corrections of the typographical and other minor errors in the original publications that have become apparent in the meantime, together with the inclusion of some additional material that had originally been excluded for editorial reasons, all the essays have been left with their original arrangement of form and content. Indeed, occasional discrepancies between the original texts and the introductory material have been tolerated on the assumption that, in accordance with the principle of philosophical hermeneutics itself, the reader might be willing to see the introduction not so much as a simple summary but as a further *interpretation*.[3]

In the first essay, entitled "Ancient Philosophy becomes Medieval Philosophy," the process of transmitting the dominant Platonism of late antiquity is studied with the emphasis falling on the authors of the relevant texts and their prominent philosophical themes. Notable among these authors is Calcidius, who in late antiquity produced a partial Latin translation and commentary on Plato's *Timaeus* that was widely read during the Middle Ages, achieving the climax of its popularity during the twelfth century. The commentary transmitted a certain understanding of the Platonic doctrines concerning the forms or Ideas and the world-soul. In connection with the Theory of Forms, Calcidius establishes as fundamental a triple structure of first principles consisting of God, the forms,

2 The original lengthy titles of certain essays have been abbreviated to achieve a more harmonious presentation in keeping with a collective volume. For the earlier titles, see the *Table of Contents*.

3 Since some of these articles have already been cited elsewhere in the modern scholarship, and in order to maintain consistency, the pagination of the original articles is inserted in **bold** numbering within the texts.

and matter, which reappears in Hugh of St. Victor, and also assumes a distinction between transcendent and immanent forms, which is extensively developed by Bernard of Chartres. Calcidius' doctrine of the world-soul, together with a controversial extrapolation from it whereby this soul is closely associated with the Holy Spirit, occurs in the writings of William of Conches and Peter Abelard. In addition, this Latin commentator's approach to the problem of the origin of the world is followed by William of Conches and Thierry of Chartres, and his handling of the relation between the macrocosm and microcosm by Bernard Silvestris.

The second transmitter of ancient Platonism to the medieval world considered in this essay is Boethius, and in his case the transmission occurs in connection with a variety of doctrines stated in his numerous works. From different viewpoints, Boethius may be considered as both an Aristotelian and a Platonist, and indeed he is one of the main sources – together with Augustine – for the influential notion of the harmony of Plato and Aristotle, which in practice resulted in the sublimation of the latter into the former. In his commentaries on Aristotelian logic and Ciceronian rhetoric, Boethius transmits important methodological ideas: for instance, concerning the hierarchical order of the arts, the construction of formulae of introduction, and the axiomatic method of thought. Among the more strictly Platonic tendencies in his thought, Boethius' doctrine concerning the definition of nature can be found in Eriugena, his notion of applying the Aristotelian categories to God in Anselm of Canterbury, his distinction between *quod est* and *quo est* in Bonaventure and Aquinas, his notion of enfolding and unfolding causes and effects in Thierry of Chartres and Nicholas of Cusa, his distinction between eternity and time in Anselm of Canterbury, his ideas about cosmic harmony in Alan of Lille, his distinction between levels of cognition in Nicholas of Cusa, and his theory of universals in John of Salisbury.

A third vehicle for the transmission of ancient philosophy to the medieval world is Proclus, the late ancient Athenian Platonist, albeit not in his original Greek but in Latin translation. Proclus' influence appears in the Latin world at first indirectly via an Arabic text also translated into Latin under the title of *De Causis* and consisting of a series of propositions and proofs. The direct transmission of Proclus begins in the thirteenth century, when the Flemish Dominican William of Moerbeke translated not only his *Elements of Theology* – the original inspiration behind the axiomatically structured *De Causis* – but also his *Commentary on the Parmenides*, extracts from his *Commentary on the Timaeus*, and his *Three Opuscula*. These translations had already inspired Thomas Aquinas to Christian reformulation of the Platonic doctrines of limit and infinity and of the triad of being, life, and intellect and Dietrich of Freiburg to similar reformulations of the fourfold system of unity, intellect, soul, and body and of the causal cycle of procession and reversion, when Berthold of Moosburg in the fourteenth century produced a massive *Exposition* of the *Elements of Theology*, in which he systematically demonstrated the full Neoplatonic doctrine of the One above being for the first time in medieval thought.

After studying Calcidius, Boethius, and Proclus, the essay concludes with a brief survey of some other late ancient philosophical works that exerted influence via Latin translations. For instance, the translation of the Hermetic *Asclepius* gave currency to the notion of God as being simultaneously one and many and having no names and every name and the translation of Nemesius' *On the Nature of Man* to various arguments against the notion of the soul as a harmony. Because of certain doctrinal affinities, Macrobius' *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio* is considered together with these translations. This work provided the only detailed account of Plotinus' teaching regarding the three hypostases of the One, Intellect, and Soul available before the complete Latin translation of this Greek writer became available in the fifteenth century. Finally, the present essay concludes by noting that Calcidius and Boethius are the dominant transmitters of Platonic philosophy to the early Middle Ages, whereas Boethius and Proclus together determine the course of the later medieval Platonism. Overall, it is through Proclus and Aristotle rather than through Plato and Aristotle that ancient philosophy becomes medieval philosophy.

Whereas the previous essay emphasizes the *ancient* texts that were read by medieval Platonists, the essay entitled "Philosophy and Humanism" turns the spotlight onto the *medieval* Platonists who read the ancient texts. Historians of philosophy often feel justified in drawing a methodological dividing line somewhere near the end of the twelfth century at a point when a kind of critical mass of Latin translations from Arabic and Greek had been achieved, and on this basis they divide the study of medieval philosophy into two phases: namely, an early period of predominantly Platonic thought that antedates the impact of the translations and the foundation of the universities and a later period that reflects the more emphatic Aristotelianism of the newly translated corpus of university texts. The present essay alters this traditional perspective slightly in order to emphasize the continuity between the earlier Platonic tradition and a later one persisting as a kind of subculture outside the main university milieu.

Our study of this continuity proceeds through three stages. After making a conceptual analysis of the notions of "humanist" and "humanism" as applied primarily in the context of the Renaissance, we define and justify the notion of "medieval humanism" on the basis of a historical analogy and then consider the application of that term specifically to the domain of Platonic philosophy. The criteria that modern historians employ to characterize Renaissance *philosophical* humanism include such features as an emphasis on moral and natural philosophy and on cosmological and theological anthropocentrism, a reverence for more ancient rather than more recent texts, and a preoccupation with establishing the authenticity of the latter and imitating their literary style. Since many of these features already occur during the medieval period, albeit with a less complete articulation of the programme as defined, we are justified in speaking by analogy of a certain medieval humanism. This is true concerning the Carolingian period and even more true regarding twelfth-century France, whose philosophical humanism not only parallels that of the Renaissance in many respects but is actually in continuity

with it through the intermediary of Petrarch and similar figures. In the present essay dealing with the work of medieval Platonic philosophical humanists, we repeatedly emphasize three features of their methodological approach: namely, the assumption that there is an agreement between Platonism and Christianity, a belief in the ultimate unity of truth, and the notion that the history of philosophy represents an alternation of concealment and revelation.

The next stage in the analysis posits a distinction between three phases within the development of medieval philosophical humanism. The first phase of this tradition might be termed "pseudo-Dionysian" and is exemplified by Iohannes Scottus Eriugena, the author of the first successful translation into Latin of the Greek theological works disseminated under the pseudonym of the "Dionysius the Areopagite" whose conversion by St. Paul is recounted in Acts 17:34. Eriugena's most important original work was the *Periphyseon* ("On Natures"), in which the world-historical process is understood as a kind of circular emanation through four forms, genera, or natures. The second phase of the medieval Platonic humanist tradition is that of the "Latin Platonism" that was cultivated especially by certain scholars in early twelfth-century France. Among the many possible examples of this intellectual tendency, which is preoccupied with the interpretation of late ancient Latin texts and characterized by a shift in emphasis from theological to cosmological questions, we have chosen Bernard Silvestris' *Commentary on the Aeneid* for detailed discussion. The third phase of the tradition might be termed "pseudo-Dionysian *and* Latin Platonic" and is exemplified by Nicholas of Cusa, the proponent of the famous doctrine of "learned ignorance," which came to him in a moment of divine illumination but was corroborated primarily by Dionysius the Areopagite's works. Nicholas' treatise *On Learned Ignorance* combines its Dionysian dialectic of affirmative and negative theology with a cosmology derived directly and indirectly through late ancient Latin authors.

The essay concludes by turning briefly from the relatively internal or critical analysis of readers and their texts to a more external or *meta*-critical approach. Here, the phenomenon identified as medieval philosophical humanism is assessed in terms of criteria supplied by more modern structural and deconstructive criticism and especially by the discernment of asymmetric oppositional structures in textual sources and the potential for hermeneutical reversal of their inherent polarities by the modern reader. In particular, we note that the medieval humanism exhibits the dichotomy of practical and theoretical, with the priority occasionally accorded to the former, that of rhetorical[4] and dialectical giving the priority often to the former, and that of Platonic and Aristotelian with the priority assigned invariably to the former. The relative predominance in the first two dichotomous structures – but not in the third – parallels the situation in some post-Heideggerian analogues of philosophical humanism.

4 Or more precisely, grammatical overlapping with rhetorical.

The essay entitled "The First Principles of Latin Neoplatonism" returns to the viewpoint of the first essay, in which the process of transmitting the dominant Platonism of late antiquity was studied with the emphasis placed on the authors of texts transmitted and their prominent philosophical themes rather than on the medieval readers of those texts. However, the emphasis is now decisively shifted from the authors to the themes, and there are three aspects of the approach pursued with respect to the latter. First, the tradition of *Neo*-Platonism – *i.e*. the teaching of ancient writers who use post-Plotinian Greek Platonism as their model – is brought into relief. Second, pagan and Christian authors are studied in tandem with one another. And third, certain systematic "principles" of this thought – *i.e*. a minimum number of postulates understood in a metaphysical way – are marked out for discussion.

After an introductory section which specifically identifies the first principles with the so-called primary hypostases of Plotinus' philosophy as understood by his student Porphyry – that is, the triad of the One or Good, intellect, and soul – the essay turns to its main topic, which is the distinction of eight philosophemes and their exploration in various authors and texts. The neologism "philosopheme" – derived by analogy from technical terms such as "morpheme" and "mytheme" that gained currency in structuralism – denotes a set of intersecting philosophical ideas in one passage or a sequence of passages. In the present context, the philosophemes exhibit the nature of the primary hypostases and the various relations between them.

A summary of the cosmological doctrine of Plato's *Timaeus* in the ninth poem of Boethius' *On the Consolation of Philosophy*, book III constitutes the first of the eight philosophemes. The second philosopheme is based on Augustine's *On the Literal Interpretation of Genesis*, in which the six days of creation mentioned in *Genesis* are understood as six phases in the circular motion of angelic cognition with respect to God and created things. The third philosopheme is also Augustinian, being the image of the triune God represented by the various triplicities of the human soul's powers or faculties. The fourth philosopheme is again Augustinian: in this case, the profoundly historical cyclic motion of fall and redemption based on Scripture, which parallels the relatively non-historical cycle of the soul's procession and return in paganism. The summary of the Plotinian doctrine of the three primary hypostases in Macrobius' *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio* constitutes the fifth of the eight philosophemes. The sixth philosopheme is based on the sixth prose of Boethius' *On the Consolation of Philosophy*, book IV, in which an emanative continuity is established in which fate is understood as unfolding whatever is pre-contained in providence. The seventh philosopheme is Augustinian, being the hierarchy subsisting within the human soul between the extremes of divine and human number. The eighth philosopheme is again Boethian: in this case, an epistemological theory according to which everything known is comprehended according to the power of those faculties which know it.

Although this was by no means among the primary aims of the present essay, this investigation of the first principles of Latin Neoplatonism concludes by

briefly illustrating the reception of these philosophemes in various selections and combinations by different medieval writers. In this connection, Iohannes Scottus Eriugena, Anselm of Canterbury, William of Conches, Thierry of Chartres, and Nicholas of Cusa are brought up for close examination.

The fourth essay, entitled "Non-Discursive Thinking in Medieval Platonism," turns to a specific issue in medieval Platonism that is especially problematic. It was seen clearly by Neoplatonists of late antiquity and, to varying degrees also by medieval Platonists influenced by them, that the limitations of formal-logical thinking with respect to their theological and metaphysical imperatives had to be overcome by the introduction of a further notion of non-discursive or supra-rational thought. Of course, even if such a thinking could somehow be *experienced*, it could only be *conceptualized* discursively, since conceptualization is by definition discursive: a point which Plotinus and Proclus, who associated non-discursive thought with the pure intellect and its conceptualization with the intellectual summit of soul, clearly understood. In the present essay, we study this problematic not so much at its point of origin in late ancient Platonic philosophy but mostly in the various derivations from the ancient thought elaborated by medieval Platonists. The best way to illuminate this obscure problematic has seemed to be to articulate it by distinguishing four "criteria," two of which can be considered as "logical," namely, suspension of the law of contradiction and non-propositional utterance, and a further two which might be characterized as "noetic-ontological," namely, timeless dialectic and absence of inference. The method of the essay involves the close study of selected texts combined with the application to them of an overtly meta-critical hermeneutic, given that the problematic nature of non-discursiveness is not always addressed in the sources and the four criteria are not distinguished as such.

The essay also falls into two parts. In the first part, it examines some instances of writing by late ancient and medieval Latin Platonists that maintain a simple opposition between non-discursive and discursive thought. Thus, indications regarding a *suspension of the law of contradiction* are studied in numerous passages from Augustine, Boethius, Calcidius, pseudo-Dionysius (in Latin translation), Anselm of Canterbury, Thierry of Chartres, and Nicholas of Cusa. Explicit references to a *non-propositional utterance* – our second criterion of non-discursive thought – are less common in the medieval Platonic tradition, although we consider some examples found in Augustine and Anselm of Canterbury in connection with their Trinitarian psychology. Discussions of a *timeless dialectic* – the third criterion of non-discursive thought – are quite rare in the medieval Platonic tradition, although we examine some instances supplied by Augustine and Eriugena in connection with their angelic hexameral theory. Suggestions regarding an *absence of inference* are studied in various passages from Macrobius, Boethius, William of Conches, and Thierry of Chartres. The second part of the essay examines some instances of writing by late ancient and medieval Latin Platonists that no longer simply maintain an opposition between non-discursive and discursive thought but also mediate that opposition. Here, the relevant examples are drawn from Proclus

in his medieval Latin translation by William of Moerbeke and from Dietrich of Freiburg and Nicholas of Cusa. These developments include a notable expansion of the fourth criterion discussed in the first part of this essay.

From this point onwards in *Metaphysics and Hermeneutics*, the essays are devoted to the individual thinkers who are arguably of the greatest importance for the history of medieval Platonism. The essay "The Pseudonymity of Dionysius the Areopagite and the Platonic Tradition" starts from what seems to be a proliferation of enigmas surrounding the author known as "Dionysius the Areopagite." These enigmas are associated in the first instance with Dionysius' name, for this unknown author attempts to present his work as though it were a first-century and apostolic document not only in adopting the name of St. Paul's Athenian convert but also in choosing as fictitious addressees of his *Letters* such figures as St. John the Evangelist. There is a further enigmatic element in Dionysius' literary activity, for the same author refers to the titles and summarizes the contents of various other treatises which he claims to have written but which are either non-extant or perhaps originally fictitious. A third type of enigma is a fundamental component in Dionysius' actual doctrine, for his account of transcendent unknowing in his *On Divine Names* and *On Mystical Theology* and his teaching regarding angelic symbolism in his *On the Celestial Hierarchy* are as much dependent on concealment and paradox as they are on revelation and dialectic.

However, the main purpose of this essay is to contextualize Dionysius within the medieval Western Platonic tradition as a whole. His writings in a succession of their Latin translations produced between Eriugena in the ninth century and Marsilio Ficino in the fifteenth have an obviously defining presence within that tradition. However, the doctrine contained in those writings has not so much a static but rather a *synergic* relation to the other varieties of Platonism that ebb and flow within the broader stream of medieval thought. Here at least, Dionysius can be considered as the least enigmatic element in a decidedly enigmatic tradition, since the scale and coherence of his literary remains and their presumed apostolic authority place him beyond the doubts and disputes that beset the utilization of overtly or implicitly "Platonic" texts of more fragmentary character and lesser status.

Starting from the inherently hermeneutical character of the medieval Platonic tradition that has been demonstrated in the earlier studies in this volume, three intertextual layers are distinguished from one another in the present essay, these layers representing both the presence of the said authors and texts within the literary tradition and the degrees of prominence or explicitness with which they are cited by medieval writers. The highest level[5] of intertexts has an enigmatic character for a variety of reasons and includes the Latin translations of Plato, the *Commentary on the Timaeus* by Calcidius, the *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio* by Macrobius,

5 The terms "highest," "middle," and "lowest" are here used strictly as a spatial analogy and do not indicate relative importance of the material in the eyes of medieval readers.

the Hermetic *Asclepius*, and the pseudo-Aristotelian *On Causes*. The middle level is constituted by the writings of Dionysius who here emerges as relatively non-enigmatic in the special sense defined earlier. The lowest level of intertexts is represented by the works of Augustine, which, if not enigmatic in themselves, establish the notion of enigma or concealment as an integral part of the ancient academic tradition. Among the various medieval Platonists, the present essay casts the spotlight on Thierry of Chartres, who especially develops the notions of affirmative and negative theology of Dionysius in a highly synergic intertextual conjunction with Calcidius, Boethius, and the Latin *Asclepius* that seems to have largely escaped the attention of earlier scholars.

The study of Dionysius the Areopagite continues with the essay "Dionysius' *On Divine Names* and Proclus' *Platonic Theology*." It was established during the nineteenth century and is now generally accepted that the author of the Dionysian corpus was a student or follower of the Athenian school of Neoplatonism: *i.e*. the phase in the history of the ancient Academy when it was under the headship of Syrianus and Proclus. However, these agreed facts have not been utilized in order to illuminate an extremely difficult question in the interpretation of Dionysius' treatise *On Divine Names*. This concerns the order of discussion of the divine names, which begins with the name of goodness, continues through a series of typically "Platonic" names, makes a transition to overtly biblical names, and ends with the name of unity. The present essay sets out to remedy this deficiency, making use of the structural analogy between discourse and reality while at the same time challenging some more recent scholarly views.

The study begins from a consideration of the doctrine in Proclus' *Platonic Theology* concerning the relation between the sequence of divine names – as set out in this later Platonist's exegesis of the *Parmenides* – and the causal cycle of procession and reversion. Our analysis immediately calls attention to the fact that, since this metaphysical relation also implies a transition from discursive to non-discursive thought, Proclus' philosophical discussion is articulated into one component likened to an "argument" and another similar to a "hymn." Here, we see a striking example of the manner in which logical procedures are juxtaposed with rhetorical forms or – to be more precise – are displayed in an ambivalent synthesis with them.

Having first raised the question whether Dionysius' *On Divine Names* does actually have a precise structure and answered this question in the affirmative, we propose a new interpretation which proceeds partially in the numerical order of the work's chapters in order to explain that in chapters 5 to 13, divine names are attributed to both "major" and "minor" phases of the procession-reversion cycle – *i.e*. the main triads and the triads-within-triads – according to the structure elaborated in detail throughout Proclus' theological treatise. The proposed interpretation also explains why chapter 4 has a length out of proportion to all the other chapters, this being clearly because it contains a complete procession-reversion cycle while the other chapters only refer to parts of the cycle exploited in Proclus' theology. Finally, the new interpretation explains that it is in chapters 1 to 3 that

the rationale for the distinction between the Christian trinitarianism of this section and the non-trinitarian tendency of the later chapters is stated most fully.

In conclusion, the structure of *On Divine Names* that at first sight appears to be somewhat disorganized or even chaotic turns out to follow a precise and logical progression when considered in terms of the structural principles stated in Proclus' *Theologia Platonica*. So much results from a careful intertextual reading. That this fact has not been understood by previous scholarship is a little surprising, although the general obscurity of Dionysius' diction and rhetorical style and the consequent mistranslations of his specifically philosophical terminology is no doubt partially to blame.

Iohannes Scottus Eriugena was the first important reader of Dionysius the Areopagite in western Europe and one of the greatest medieval Platonists. His most famous doctrine is that universal nature is divisible into four species: that which creates and is not created – corresponding to God as beginning of all things; that which is created and creates – equivalent to the primordial causes; that which is created and does not create – equivalent to the effects of the primordial causes; and that which does not create and is not created – corresponding to God as end of all things. This fourfold structure forms the basis of Eriugena's major philosophical treatise *Periphyseon* and can be studied from at least three viewpoints, each of which relates intertextually to a particular source or sources employed. First, from the logical viewpoint, we can consider the structure by emphasizing its links with the categorial and propositional theory expounded in the Latin Aristotelian tradition. Second, from the arithmetical viewpoint, the fourfold structure can be examined by underlining the role of numbers and proportions described in literature of Pythagorean provenance. Third, from the idealistic viewpoint, we can observe Eriugena treating the structure in an entirely novel manner, albeit with some manipulation of traditional textual sources. Since the relation between the first and third viewpoints has been studied extensively in the earlier literature, the aim of the next essay, entitled "Eriugena's Fourfold Contemplation," is to investigate that between the second and the third: in other words, to consider what might be termed Eriugena's "arithmetical idealism" or "idealist arithmetic."

The formula "production is thinking" is taken as the starting point for consideration of Eriugena's understanding of idealism. Here, the propositional form involves a semantic ambivalence in that its possible meanings include "some/all types of production are equivalent to a process of thought" and "some/all types of thinking are equivalent to a process of production." These meanings are exploited simultaneously in Eriugena's treatment of the complex relation between ideas and numbers. In the main part of the present essay, we begin by considering a variety of passages and texts containing arguments of idealist tendency in which *subjects of thought* such as God, man, and angels are turned into objects and conversely *objects of thought*, such as the primordial causes, divine names, numbers, created forms, and the six days of creation, are turned into subjects. The focus then shifts towards numbers and their treatment in various of Eriugena's texts, and we see that numerical objects, which have also now been shown to be subjects, are

handled not only in the normal computational manner but also metaphysically as *ideal* and hermeneutically as *symbolic* numbers. From a comparison of these texts, one can conclude that there is the closest relation not only between ideas and numbers but also between the metaphysical and hermeneutical spheres as such. Consequently, Eriugena's thought can be seen as characterized by the beginning of a shift towards a rather new kind of Platonism.

The eighth essay goes to the heart of medieval Platonic metaphysics with its topic of "Eriugena and the Order of the Primordial Causes." The *Periphyseon* of Eriugena takes the form of a discussion between a "Teacher" and a "Student" in which the former tends to follow the teachings of the Greek church fathers and the latter those of the Latins, although these two theologies are assumed to be in agreement, with the proviso that the Greek doctrine is a more profound statement of the Latin. Near the beginning of the treatise's third book, the student asks the teacher to explain the order that underlies the so-called "primordial causes" – equivalent to the second species of universal nature – arguing that the discussion so far has only dealt with this question in a relatively unsystematic way. The teacher provisionally concedes this point, although the final section of the present essay considers some other passages in which the student's claim is shown to be exaggerated. Having made the concession, the teacher first gives a brief account of this important doctrine by paraphrasing Dionysius' *On Divine Names*, in which he lists fifteen "names" – identified with Eriugena's primordial causes – and applies to each of these names a distinction of three metaphysical levels based on the notion of participation. Next, the teacher departs from strict adherence to his Dionysian textual antecedent, embarking on a more extended and detailed discussion in which the more peculiarly Eriugenian doctrine of the primordial causes comes to the fore.

This extended discussion can be divided into two main phases. The first phase deals with the general principles of the primordial causes' ordering. Using an elaborate analogy based on the geometrical notion of a circle, the teacher shows that there is a cycle of procession and reversion from goodness through various multiplicities and back to unity, that it is possible to begin philosophical contemplation with any item within the circular structure, and that there are as many possible orders of the items as there are investigators attempting to contemplate them. These arguments show that the discussion of the order of the primordial causes deviates from the principle of logical division based on the *Arbor Porphyriana* in three respects. First, this discussion is *idealist* in that it assumes that reality is somehow mind-dependent. Second, it is open to the possibility of *non-discursiveness* in proposing a distinction between "wisdom" – which is non-discursive – and "knowledge" – which is discursive – together with the denial of the law of contradiction implicit in the former case. Third, this discussion is *theophanic* in that it assumes that there are different contemplations according to the metaphysical and moral status of the subject. In addition, the geometrical analogy of the circle shows the self-reflexive character of the primordial causes' collective structure.

The second phase of the extended discussion considers a specific example of ordering: that of the primordial cause of goodness and in so doing assumes the

equivalence between logical and metaphysical inclusion. Here, an initial argument shows that goodness is more general than being and that goodness is associated with creativity and that it represents the transition from non-being to being. A further argument again shows that goodness is more general than being and that goodness is associated with superiority and that it represents the transition out of non-being in two senses: namely, as a movement from superiority and from inferiority to being, respectively. After this, the student makes a fairly accurate summary of the teacher's arguments, which indicates that he fully understands the idealist and theophanic aspects of the latter's explanation but not the non-discursive one. That this situation is consistent with the theophanic distinction itself between the teacher's relatively higher and the student's relatively lower level of understanding provides evidence of the close conceptual association between the methodological structure of this text and the metaphysical structure of reality.

Most of the essays presented so far in this volume have dealt with an intellectual tradition formed by writers whose philosophical thinking is similar to that of late medieval Scholasticism in applying itself substantially to the reading of texts, albeit exhibiting much less formal argumentation than would be found in the writings of the Schoolmen. This leads to the conclusion that is perhaps surprising to many modern readers: namely, that the partnership between logic and metaphysics which has been canonical at least since the time of Aristotle is surreptitiously modified by the medieval Platonists in the direction of a partnership between rhetoric and metaphysics. It is perfectly understandable that this modification cannot be seen as either complete or acknowledged in the authors concerned, since the full extent of the relation between *hermeneutics* and metaphysics sustained by this promotion of rhetoric will not be so much apparent in the work of any *single* medieval Platonist but rather will emerge most clearly in the *relation between* successive Platonic philosophers.

Now, the modification of the partnership between logic and metaphysics in the direction of a partnership between rhetoric and metaphysics that accompanies the elevation of a new kind of hermeneutics, given that it is disclosed more easily in the relation between successive philosophers than in any single individual, can be grasped more easily by modern readers with a meta-critical approach than by the authors themselves in their critical reflection. It will therefore be very illuminating to set up a parallelism or analogy between an example of a medieval construction of metaphysics – with a more limited role of rhetoric – and an example of a modern *de*construction of metaphysics – with a more prominent rhetorical tendency – to see how much it might be possible to discover a similar analogy or synergy somewhere in the medieval tradition itself. The next essay, entitled "Eriugena and Heidegger: An Encounter," represents a kind of "thought-experiment" enabling us to pursue an investigation of this kind.[6]

6 This ninth essay thus functions as a kind of structural pivot between the eight preceding essays and the three to follow – especially the eleventh and the twelfth – by adopting for the first time and uniquely an overt meta-critical stance. Indeed, the rationale for the interpretative method that has been implicitly utilized in this volume as a whole is here defined more explicitly. This is because

In the introductory portion of this essay, Heidegger's interpretation of Platonism, especially in his *Contributions to Philosophy*, is sketched. We see how the German philosopher interpreted the *Idea*, the *agathon*, the soul, and the *epekeina* of Platonism; how he understood Christianity as adopting these teachings without reflection; and how he viewed this same approach as persisting when medieval philosophy divided into realism and nominalism and when early modern philosophy turned into German Idealism. Heidegger defines Platonism first, as the inquiry into the beingness of beings and second, as being grasped within a relation of representation. He also treats the entire history of philosophy from Plato to Nietzsche as being under the domination of the "Platonic" viewpoint and argues that the primary task of philosophy is the overcoming of this Platonism. Since the aim of the present essay is to explore a parallelism or analogy between the medieval construction of metaphysics exemplified by Eriugena's thinking and the modern *Destruktion* or deconstruction of metaphysics exemplified in that of Heidegger, we here consider the structural analogy between on the one hand, the "first beginning" in the Presocratics and the "second beginning" in Heidegger which the latter himself notes, and on the other hand, the similar structural analogy between a "first beginning" in Eriugena and a second beginning in Heidegger which is our meta-critical reflection. However, the present essay's view of the relation between the two structural analogies is perfectly consistent with Heidegger's own understanding of the history of philosophy as a series of disconnected starts unknown to one another stemming from the abyssal character of the question of Being.

The main part of this essay is divided into three sections. The first section deals with Heidegger alone and considers the hermeneutical relations or "meaningful equivalences" within a fourfold structure consisting of Being, *Dasein*, Language, and Time, which can also be described as the "happening of Truth." Employing a multi-directional interpretative strategy, the discussion here proceeds through Being in relation to itself, to *Dasein*, to Language, and to Time; to *Dasein* in relation to itself, to Language, and to Time; to Language in relation to itself and to Time; and through Time in relation to itself. The second section dealing with Eriugena begins by examining his notion of Being. According to this medieval Platonist, God or Nature is *a* Being and not *Being* – in Heidegger's sense – because the facts that God is above being, that he is non-being, and that he is the cause of being and non-being must all be understood in terms of a single emanative structure that is *existent* in the sense of philosophical realism. Also according to Eriugena, if God is considered in relation to language, then his being is metaphysically prior to language and not meaningfully equivalent to language – as in Heidegger – and if God is considered in relation to time, then his being is metaphysically prior to

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one of the two figures to be interpreted, Heidegger, is undoubtedly among the pre-eminent modern theorists and practitioners of philosophical hermeneutics, and his methods have often been reflected in our own earlier interpretative strategies. However, the interpretative method revealed in this meta-critical moment should not be thought entirely extraneous to the reading of ancient and medieval Platonic texts in general.

time and not meaningfully equivalent to time – as in Heidegger. The third section deals with Heidegger together with Eriugena and treats the fourfold structure of earth, world, men, and gods in Heidegger's poetic interpretation as a synergic analogue of the fourfold structure of universal nature in Eriugena. No connection between the two schemata is verifiable on the basis of a historical-philosophical interpretation of the traditional kind, although a new kind of relation is conceivable through the postulation of a hermeneutical "turning" – as Heidegger would style it – between the two thinkers.

The next essay turns from Eriugena to Nicholas of Cusa. This fifteenth-century philosopher, canon lawyer, papal diplomat, bishop, and ultimately cardinal was undoubtedly influenced indirectly by Eriugena, although he mostly takes an independent approach merely paralleling or mirroring that of his predecessor because of a similar attitude to similar sources on the two authors' part. This essay serves as an introduction to the study of Nicholas' metaphysical doctrines – to be continued in the two subsequent pieces dealing with his objective and subjective ontology and with his notions of coincidence of opposites and of philosophical enigmas – by focusing on his knowledge of Plato's *persona*. The focus is important because, in the period from the ninth to the thirteenth century, the term "Platonism" essentially denotes a body of doctrine that has become disconnected through the vagaries of indirect transmission from its originator. However, by the early fifteenth century, it is possible to associate the term more closely with Plato himself, who is becoming somewhat better known through some new Latin translations and commentaries, even if he has not yet achieved the full revelation awaiting him at the hands of the so-called Florentine "Academy." For these reasons, the present essay is only tentatively entitled "Nicholas of Cusa and the Historical Plato."

The first part of the essay explores the manner in which Nicholas approaches "Plato" and distinguishes two aspects that might be characterized as the ultimate elusiveness of Plato's literary *persona* and the distorting hermeneutical lens through which that *persona* had to be seen. The literary *persona* of Plato is ultimately elusive because Nicholas had access to an expanding yet still restricted canon of dialogues presented in Latin translation only. This comprised the *Timaeus* in the ancient translation by Calcidius; the *Parmenides* in the thirteenth-century translation by William of Moerbeke and in the fifteenth-century version by George of Trebizond; the *Meno* and *Phaedo* in the twelfth-century translations of Aristippus of Catania; the *Apology, Crito*, and *Phaedrus* in the humanistic translations of Leonardo Bruni; and the *Republic* in the translation of Pier Candido Decembrio. The hermeneutical lens through which Plato's *persona* had to be seen is distorting because Nicholas subscribes to a peculiar theory about the history of Platonism based primarily on a convoluted intertextual relation between Plato, St. Paul, Dionysius, and Proclus. Here, it is assumed that Dionysius is directly inspired by the Apostle, that Dionysius also depends on Plato, that Proclus' doctrine is similar to Dionysius', and that Proclus was subsequent to Dionysius although it is unclear whether Proclus had actually read him. The elusive *persona* of Plato and the distorting hermeneutic lens are naturally associated in Nicholas' mind because he

also subscribes to the belief derived from Augustine concerning the tradition of esoteric Platonism and its concealment of dogmatic metaphysics.

It is against the background of these historical assumptions that Nicholas elaborates his notion of Platonic philosophy. Here, we may speak of two chronologically distinct phases in Nicholas' approach: an earlier phase involving his reliance exclusively on Latin sources and a later one introducing the exploitation of Greek sources in Latin translation, both phases being marked by the use of Dionysius as the definitive formulator of the Platonic position and by a feeling for the tension between Plato's and Aristotle's thought. For Nicholas, both in the earlier period of his work and in the later phase increasingly, the dialogues of Plato are becoming philosophical documents that should be read at first hand as well as serve as remote sources of inspiration. In fact, one can speak of the immediate and direct influence of the dialogues on Nicholas on the one hand in terms of their philosophical *content*. Here, readings of the *Timaeus*, *Parmenides*, and other dialogues provide him with a number of Platonic doctrines either to be absorbed into his own thinking or to be used to delineate his own position by contrast. The *Timaeus* provides a prevailingly cosmological interpretation of Plato's thought, whereas the *Parmenides* introduces the possibility of a predominantly theological interpretation of his teaching. One can also speak of the immediate and direct influence of the dialogues on Nicholas in terms of their rhetorical *form*. Following the Ciceronian model, he composes dialogues in which he associates specific characters with specific philosophical doctrines to emphasize the relativity of viewpoints. Perhaps inspired by the beginning of the *Timaeus*, he also introduces a specific number of characters in order to reflect the mathematical structure of reality itself. Of course, the aspects of form and content are as intimately connected with one another for Nicholas as they had been for Plato.

The essay entitled "Nicholas of Cusa's Rewriting of the Anselmian *Proslogion*" is the first of two dealing with what might be termed the fundamental ontology of this fifteenth-century thinker, its particular starting point being the traditional questions regarding the existence and nature of God. In fact, Nicholas begins by citing his great predecessor Anselm of Canterbury, whom he reads somewhat creatively with reference to the so-called *ratio Anselmi* that has passed into the standard philosophical repertory under the title of "the ontological argument." Although it has escaped the notice of many later writers of philosophical textbooks, it does not escape that of Nicholas of Cusa that Anselm's *Proslogion* attempts to prove the existence of God by using *two* definitions of God: namely, "that than which nothing greater can be thought" and "that which is greater than can be thought." Nicholas interprets these definitions together in at least four different ways: as denoting the affirmative and negative aspects of a single relation, as implying that any questioning about God's existence presupposes that existence, as denoting two specific kinds of maxima, and as implying a contextualization in the art of geometry.

Nicholas' treatment of the two Anselmian definitions must be understood in the context of his metaphysical doctrine as a whole. Although this doctrine was

being constantly refined in matters of detail and restated periodically in terms of newly acquired sources, it remained stable in its broad outline from his writings of the 1440s *On Learned Ignorance* and *On Conjectures* onwards. It has therefore seemed legitimate to concentrate on a historical-structural rather than a historical-developmental analysis in the present essay.[7] In pursuit of this aim, we analyse his metaphysical doctrine on the one hand, in terms of certain ideas typical of the earlier Neoplatonic tradition: that reality can be considered as an oppositional structure with a privileged term – for instance, as God as unity (+) and the creature as multiplicity (−); that it can be considered as a continuum, especially one of emanative procession; and that the continuum is combined with a disjunction – for instance, when God is said to be both cause of and also not cause of a creature's multiplicity. On the other hand, his metaphysical teaching can be analysed in terms of three modifications of those traditional ideas: the introduction of new privileged terms such as absolute and infinite; the treatment of the continuum as a formalized coincidence of opposites or as a fourfold structure comprising the term A/non-B, A/B, non-A/B, and non-A/non-B; and the widening of the disjunction – for instance, when there is said to be no proportion between God and the creature.

The starting point of this essay has been provided by Nicholas of Cusa's handling of the *ratio Anselmi*. However, it quickly becomes apparent that his modifications and developments of this traditional teaching are motivated not only by contextual but also by intertextual requirements. In fact, any careful analysis of Nicholas' metaphysical doctrine in its entirety shows how closely the hermeneutics and metaphysics of this pre-modern philosopher are integrated with one another. This fusion is displayed with particular clarity in his formulation of the "art of conjectures" (*ars coniecturarum*): a philosophical method that stands firmly on the borderline between the logical and the rhetorical. In the most notable instances of its application, it is impossible to determine whether it was the reading of certain sources which resulted in the innovations in doctrine or vice versa. The present essay therefore also briefly discusses the manner in which Nicholas incorporates the reading of other sources into the framework provided by the two Anselmian proofs. Especially prominent among these are such earlier Platonists as Dionysius the Areopagite, Proclus, Eriugena, and the author of the *Clavis Physicae*.

The twelfth essay, entitled "Nicholas of Cusa as Summation and Singularity," further pursues these questions of intertextuality, tradition, and innovation. As in the earlier essay on the pseudonymity of Dionysius, the discussion here starts from the intertextual character of the medieval Platonic tradition, although in Nicholas' case, we need to distinguish at least two chronological phases in his assimilation of the various sources. In the earlier phase (1440s to early 1450s), three intertextual levels may be distinguished:[8] a lowest level formed by Calcidius' *Commentary*

7 Although the methods and terminology utilized here owe something to contemporary structuralism and deconstruction, we do not consider these as totally extraneous the Nicholas' own writing and thinking.

8 On the purely spatial analogy implicit in these "levels," see note 5.

on the Timaeus, a middle one derived from Boethian ideas and from Macrobius' teaching, and a highest level formed by the *Asclepius* attributed to Hermes Trismegistus. The later phase of Nicholas' work of textual assimilation from his *Beryllo* (1459) onwards adds two additional levels: a first level constituted by extracts from Plato's *Letters II* and *VII*, probably derived from a Latin translation of Proclus, and a second one represented by more extended readings of Proclus' philosophy in the latter's *Commentary on the Parmenides* and *Platonic Theology*. Nicholas shows to his own satisfaction Proclus' dependence on – and therefore legitimation through – the writings of the supreme *Christian* Platonic authority: Dionysius the Areopagite.

The second part of this essay shifts the focus from Nicholas' implicit hermeneutical practice to his explicit hermeneutical precepts and in so doing from his summation of traditional Platonism to the singularity of his own version. It is here that the hermeneutical activity of the human soul is no longer seen as ultimately subordinated to the goal of logical-ontological formalism – as it is in traditional metaphysics – but achieves a quasi-autonomy almost approaching that advocated by modern writers in the post-Heideggerian milieu. Its implicit aim is the coincidence of the universal, theoretical, and non-temporal elements with the individual, practical, and temporal aspects which oppose them – in short, of the contemplative with the pragmatic – rather than the emphatic preoccupation with the former characteristic of earlier thinking. Among the more singular aspects of this hermeneutic we here consider first, the notion of "conjecture," which is *implicitly* hermeneutic. That this notion is hermeneutic is not stated in so many words, although it is suggested by the etymological connection with "symbol" whereby the Latin compound *con* + *iactura* reflects the Greek compound *sum* + *bolon* ("with" + "thrown" in each case). Second, we consider the notion of "enigma," which is *explicitly* hermeneutic.

After a brief general discussion of conjecture in terms of its relation to participation and its roots in Dionysian, Boethian, and especially Lullian thought, the essay turns to Nicholas' penultimate treatise *On the Pursuit of Wisdom*, which not only shows that conjecturing is a hermeneutic and historical activity but also supplies two important examples of conjectures in *possest* and *non aliud*. Each of these conjectures has a treatise devoted to it, and in these late works, Nicholas states clearly that as "enigmas," they are explicitly hermeneutic and that they are what we may term "artificial verbal tools": *i.e*. not things, concepts, or (simple) words. It is here that Nicholas most obviously breaks new ground in exploring the traditional problem of the relation between metaphysics and hermeneutics. For these artificial verbal tools might be characterized as "one-folds" of (conceptual+) linguistic character as well as (real+) conceptual character which can be *un*folded conceptually – *e.g*. as possibility and actuality – or linguistically – *e.g*. as *posse* + *est*. As such, they are capable of revealing to the practitioner of the art of conjecture many things about God as first cause, as Trinity, and as divine name(s); about God's relation to the creature; about the creature as angelic choirs, as cosmic spheres, and as physical elements; and about humanity's place in the universe. To simplify things, the two enigmas are correlated with physical and artificial objects such as a top and a lens serving as their metaphors.

1

ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY BECOMES MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHY

[894] Any attempt to describe and understand the transition between ancient and medieval philosophy is immediately confronted by the enormous quantity of writings to be evaluated and by the complexity of their interrelations. In the face of such a challenge, certain methodological premises guiding the selection of authors, texts, and themes must be established, even if that selection can only be fully justified at the conclusion of the project. The analysis to be undertaken here will employ the following explicit criteria.

First, the authors of the texts transmitted and their privileged themes will be used as the basis for investigating the readers of the transmitted texts and their privileged themes rather than the reverse. To provide some concrete examples, we will employ the ancient writer Calcidius' presentation of the three principles of Platonism as a starting point for the discussion of Hugh of St. Victor's medieval treatment of the same topic, or the ancient writer Boethius' definitions of nature as a starting point for Iohannes Scottus Eriugena's treatment of the same issue during the ninth century, or again the ancient writer Proclus' placing of the One beyond Being as a starting point for Berthold of Moosburg's medieval treatment of the same question. Discussion of the actual medieval context of such philosophical questions in a systematic or chronological manner will not be our primary concern.

Secondly, the emphasis will be placed on secular rather than Christian writings, on the writings of post-classical rather than classical antiquity, and on the writings of Platonists rather than Aristotelians. In other words, we will discuss – in terms of their medieval afterlife – late ancient commentaries on Plato written by Platonists such as the *Commentarius in Timaeum* of Calcidius, certain independent treatises exhibiting Platonic tendencies like Proclus' *Elementatio Theologica*, and late ancient commentaries on Aristotle written by Platonists such as the *Commentarius in De Interpretatione* of Boethius, these works being either written originally in Latin or translated into Latin from Greek. In dealing with the transformation of ancient philosophy into medieval philosophy, it is nevertheless important to remember that medieval thinkers always read their secular, **[895]** post-classical, and Platonic sources in combination with certain *Christian*, post-classical, and Platonic sources. By

far the most important among these were Augustine and (pseudo-) Dionysius the Areopagite.[1]

Application of these criteria leads to a methodological division of this essay into three main sections dealing with the influence on medieval philosophy of the late ancient writers Calcidius, Boethius, and Proclus, respectively. This ordering conflicts with the chronological order of the late ancient authors themselves – which should rather be Calcidius, Proclus, Boethius – but is necessary in order to take account of the pattern of medieval reception. The essay will conclude with a fourth section dealing with the influence of various late ancient writers whose influence on medieval philosophy is less than that of the main group but still worthy of note.[2]

I Calcidius

The influence of ideas from Calcidius' *Commentarius in Timaeum* can be found mostly in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, with some earlier traces.[3] For the purposes of this analysis, we should particularly take account of Calcidius' doctrines regarding the three principles, the distinction between higher and lower forms, the origin of the world, the relation between the world soul and the Holy Spirit, the relation between the world soul and the human soul, and the relation between macrocosm and microcosm.

When Calcidius speaks of the three principles: God (*deus*), Matter (*silva*), Exemplar (*exemplum*),[4] he is following a doctrine elaborated within the doxographical

1 We shall note later a few places where the influence of these Christian writers combines with that of the secular Platonists in significant ways (see pp. 897 and 898 on Augustine and p, 908–909 and 911 on Dionysius). To summarize briefly: *A* (With regard to methodology) Augustine established the propaedeutic role of secular *scientia* towards Christian *sapientia*, and the concept that Platonism and Christianity agree on fundamental questions. Dionysius conferred apostolic authority on (crypto-) Platonic Christian theology. *B* (With regard to doctrine) Both writers accept the substantiality and immortality of the human soul and the providential order of creation. Augustine emphasized the dichotomy of intelligible and sensible, the parallel continua between good/being and evil/non-being, the notion of creation with time rather than in time, and the trinitarian structure of created things. Dionysius introduced a more radical transcendence of God, the formalized dichotomy of affirmative and negative theology, the formalized dichotomy of the procession and reversion of the created things, and triadic structure of the angelic world. It is usually against a backdrop of these assumptions that medieval thinkers understood what they read in Calcidius, Boethius, or Proclus.

2 The best methodological introduction to the study of the medieval Platonic tradition is probably still Klibansky 1982 (1939) – to which one must now add the collection of essays in Gersh and Hoenen 2002. In the absence of a complete large scale history, Garin 1958, Gregory 1958, Beierwaltes 1985 contain excellent surveys of specific areas. Faes de Mottoni 1979 provides a useful brief introduction with a selection of texts. Beierwaltes 1969 is a collection of classic essays by various hands. On the late ancient Latin sources of the tradition, see Gersh 1986.

3 There is no adequate survey of the influence of Calcidius during the Middle Ages. This is probably because the *fortuna* of Calcidius' commentary has been viewed as inextricable from that of the Latin *Timaeus* itself. On this combination, see Mensching 1965, Gibson 1969, Jeauneau 1975, 22–23, 27ff., Bakhouche 1997, Dutton 1997.

4 *Commentarius in Timaeum* 307. 308. 14–309. 2.

tradition with respect to the *Timaeus*. However, his version of the traditional teaching is more developed because a technical definition of a principle as simple, without quality, and eternal justifies the choice of these three terms. It is also more developed **[896]** because the mode of discovering these principles in general is specified as the process of resolution *(resolutio*) – a movement from sensible, temporal, prior for us, and posterior in nature to their opposites.[5] Moreover, the mode of studying the principles is specified either as resolution – abstraction by the mind of qualities, quantities, and shapes from sensible objects – in the case of Matter, or else as composition (*compositio*) – extrapolation by the mind from the order inherent in such objects to existence of their transcendent cause – in the case of God and Exemplar.[6] When taken at face-value, the triadic system of principles seems to imply that Matter is not created by God and that the Exemplar is external to him. It was therefore frequently cited as the quintessential Platonic teaching by medieval writers like Hugh of St. Victor[7] who wished to separate this philosophy clearly from Christianity.

Another passage in Calcidius' commentary[8] discusses a different triad occurring in Plato's text: namely, that of idea (*idea*), native form (*species nativa*), and matter (*silva*). The second member of this triad – corresponding to the sensible form entering the Receptacle as opposed to the intelligible form or archetype – aroused considerable interest during the twelfth century, given that it seemed to facilitate the reconciliation between Aristotelian and Platonic notions of form and also – via the etymological connection between *nativa* and *natura* – the emphasis upon quasi-autonomous natural processes which was desired by many contemporary thinkers. Thus, Bernard of Chartres attributes to unnamed commentators the doctrine that certain native forms (*nativae formae*) were combined by God with matter in the original cosmic confusion[9] and even criticizes Calcidius for suggesting that the primal elements resulted from the combination of *intelligible* form and matter.[10] Since Bernard's commentary became the standard gloss on Plato's dialogue during this period, we find the doctrine recurring in many other philosophical texts. A variant of the doctrine in which the *nativa* seems not to be the sensible form itself but the composite of matter and sensible form occurs in Gilbert of Poitiers.[11]

Calcidius has a clear doctrine regarding the origin of the world and a definite interpretation of Plato's quasi-sequential narrative in the *Timaeus*. For the commentator, the world is both made and eternal. Its origin can be described as

5 *Ibid.* 302. 303. 15–304. 17.
6 *Ibid.* 302. 303. 9–306. 10.
7 See *Adnotationes Elucidatoriae in Pentateuchon, in Genesim* 4, 33AB, *De Sacramentis* I. 1. 1, 187AB, *Didascalicon* II. 5, 29. 19–23.
8 *In Timaeum* 347. 339. 1–6.
9 *Glosae super Platonem* 4. 188–199.
10 *Ibid.* 8. 246–275.
11 *Expositio in Contra Euticen et Nestorium* 1. 82–85, p. 260 and *Expositio in De Trinitate* 1. 2. 26, p. 83.

causative (*causativa*) rather than temporal *(temporaria*) because it **[897]** arose in a single self-identical moment (*uno eodemque momento*). In fact, the beginnings of the world and time itself are simultaneous.[12] Since this interpretation of Plato had already been absorbed into the Christian context of creationism by Augustine who argued that the world was created not in time (*in tempore*) but with time (*cum tempore*), medieval thinkers had no difficulty in developing Calcidius' argument by combining it with the *Genesis* account of six days of creation. For example, both William of Conches[13] and Thierry of Chartres[14] distinguish the original causative moment of cosmogony – identifiable with the traces in Plato's Receptacle – from the first six days of creation in which the elements were gradually reconfigured into their present form, and also from the subsequent historical era.

Among issues of interest to medieval scholars raised by Calcidius' interpretation of the world soul mentioned in Plato's *Timaeus*, it was undoubtedly its placing as a third substance (*tertia substantia*) after God and Providence[15] that produced the greatest controversy. In the twelfth century, William of Conches argued that the world soul could be understood both as a natural force (*naturalis vigor*) providing the motions of growth, sense, and discernment to living things and also as the Holy Spirit, benevolent concord, and divine love. In his early commentary on Boethius, William adds the personal qualifier *ut mihi videtur* ("as it seems to me") to the second interpretation.[16] In his *Philosophia Mundi*, he attributes it to a group of unnamed thinkers,[17] in his commentary on Plato's *Timaeus*, he says that he will neither affirm nor deny the interpretation,[18] and in his commentary on Macrobius, he attributes it to certain thinkers who were seeking evidence of the Trinity in pagan texts.[19] Finally in the late treatise *Dragmaticon Philosophiae*, William makes no mention of the interpretation of the world soul as the Holy Spirit. Both William of Conches and Peter Abailard – by emphasizing the strictly figurative character of this interpretation, the latter was even more careful to avoid subordinating the divine persons[20] – were trying to avoid accusations of heresy. Nevertheless, the doctrine was formally condemned at the Council of Sens in 1141.[21]

Medieval controversies not only regarding the world soul itself but also concerning the relation between the world soul and human souls can be traced back to Calcidius. The beginnings of this latter controversy can be found in **[898]** Iohannes Scottus Eriugena's commentary on Martianus Capella's *De Nuptiis Philologiae et*

12 *Ibid*. 23. 73. 6–7; 23. 74. 15–19; 101. 152. 11–13; 105. 154. 17–19.
13 *Glosae super Platonem* 40–41, pp. 73–76; 43, pp. 77–78; 94, pp. 165–167.
14 *De Sex Dierum Operibus* I. 24, pp. 565–566.
15 *In Timaeum* 188. 213. 1–2.
16 *Glosae super Boetium* iii, m. 9, pp. 525–528.
17 *Philosophia Mundi* I. 4. 13.
18 *Glosae super Platonem* 71, pp. 124–125.
19 *Glosae super Macrobium* 3A.
20 See *Theologia Scholarium* I. 1411–1750.
21 There is an extensive bibliography on the medieval controversies regarding the world soul. The classic study is Gregory 1955, 123–174. Among recent discussions, see Caiazzo 1993.

Mercurii, where the writer – with specific citation of Calcidius *in expositione Timaei Platonis* ("in his exposition of Plato's *Timaeus*")[22] – explains that Plato calls the general world soul from which individual souls proceed into parts of the world body "Entelechy" (*entelechia*).[23] The closeness of the relation between general and individual implied by the notion of proceeding is crucial, given that a dispute between Ratramnus of Corbie and the disciple of a certain "Macarius" in which the relation between the general soul and the individual souls in cosmology is identified with the relation between universals and particulars in logic, probably originates in this teaching. In Ratramnus' treatise *De Anima ad Odonem*, we see on the part of Ratramnus himself one of the earliest defenses of the conceptualist and on the part of Macarius' disciple one of the earliest defenses of the realist theory of universals during the Middle Ages, both sides utilizing a combination of abstract dialectical skills and abundant citation of Augustine's *De Quantitate Animae* and Boethius' *Contra Eutychen et Nestorium*.[24]

Calcidius makes extensive use of the analogy between macrocosm and microcosm implied by the *Timaeus*. In some passages, the location of the reason within the human head is associated with the analogy between the spherical shapes of the head and of the cosmos respectively.[25] Elsewhere, Calcidius suggests that the three parts comprising the human soul – the rational, the irascible, and the appetitive – are analogous with the three types of living creature,[26] and argues that the four elements composing the human body – earth, air, fire, and water – are analogous with the four elemental constituents of the cosmos itself.[27] Medieval writers develop both the psychological and physical versions of the macrocosm-microcosm analogy. There is no more striking example than the division of Bernard Silvestris' philosophical allegory entitled *Cosmographia* into two narrative parts: the *Megacosmos* in which *Natura* complains to *Noys* about the disorderly state of *Silva*, and *Noys* responds by reducing the latter to a more polished form; and the *Microcosmos* in which *Noys* produces humanity as the completion of the cosmos, having ordering *Natura* to seek the further assistance of *Urania* and *Physis* in this process.[28]

II Boethius

[899] The influence of ideas derived from Boethius' numerous works extends throughout the medieval period, increasing progressively and continuously from

22 Eriugena seems to be referring to Calcidius' commentary in general rather than quoting a specific passage at this point. However, cf. *In Tim.* 93. 146. 20–21 (the Demiurge makes the world soul) and *ibid.* 201. 220. 18–221. 9 (the Demiurge makes the higher parts of the human soul himself and delegates the making of the lower parts to the subordinate gods).

23 *Annotationes in Marcianum* 10. 16–24.

24 See especially *De Anima ad Odonem* 8. 114. 1ff.

25 *In Timaeum* 231. 245. 3–6.

26 *Ibid.* 232. 246. 9–233. 247. 12.

27 *Ibid.* 202. 221. 20–222. 6.

28 *Cosmographia* I. Summary.

the eighth to the twelfth centuries, albeit with some abatement during the thirteenth and fourteenth under competition from Aristotle's writings.[29] Of special importance are such derivations from Boethius as the definition of nature, the application of the categories to God, the distinction between *quo est* and *id quod est*, the notions of enfolding and unfolding, the distinction between eternity and time, the notion of cosmic harmony, the notion of cognitive levels, and the theory of universals. However, we should preface discussion of these points with some remarks about Boethius' contribution to the development of philosophical methodology during the Middle Ages.

Boethian influences contributed to this development in at least four areas. *A. The Order of the Artes*. Before the formal adoption of Aristotle by the universities in the thirteenth century, it was Boethius who provided medieval thinkers with many of the principles on which the organization of knowledge and the curricula of schools were based. William of Conches may be cited as an example of such a thinker. In his *Glosae super Boetium*, William explains that wisdom can be divided into the theoretical and the practical, the theoretical into theology, mathematics, and physics, and the mathematical into arithmetic, music, geometry, and astronomy.[30] Given that the first division is based on an inscription of the letters Q and P on the robe of the personified *Philosophia*, the second on the distinction between a science's objects as things outside bodies, things around bodies, and the properties of bodies, and the third on the distinction between a science's objects as multitude in itself, multitude in relation, immobile magnitude, and mobile magnitude, William is clearly producing this entire structure from the combination of three Boethian passages: *De Consolatione Philosophiae* I, pr. 1. 17–21, *De Sancta Trinitate* 2, 68–83, and *De Arithmetica* I. 1, 23–45. *B. The Formulae of Introduction*. It is obviously important to understand the thematic organization of any text selected for commentary, and Boethius follows an unidentified Greek source in formally listing six questions to be addressed as preliminary to a reading. These are, regarding *1* the work's overall intention (*intentio, skopos*), *2* the reason for its importance (*utilitas*), *3* its order of discussion (*ordo*), *4* the correctness of its ascription to the author (*si germanus*), *5* the meaning of its title (*inscriptio*), and *6* its relation to a part **[900]** of philosophy (*ad quam partem philosophiae*).[31] We find exactly the same set of questions or an abbreviated set prefaced to the anonymous Carolingian *Glossae in Porphyrium*,[32] to Peter Abailard's *Logica "Nostrorum*

29 There is no satisfactory account of Boethius' influence in the Middle Ages as a whole. However, there are many good studies of the influences of specific works and doctrines. On the tradition of *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, see Courcelle 1967, Troncarelli 1981, Hoenen and Nauta 1997. On that of the theological tractates, see Schrimpf 1966. Gibson 1981 is a collection of essays on the Boethian tradition which includes essays dealing also with the influences of the logical, rhetorical, and mathematical works

30 *Glosae super Boetium.* i, pr. 1, 268–362.

31 *In Isagogen Porphyrii, editio prima* I. 1. 4. 17–5. 10.

32 At *Glossae. in Porphyrium* 27. 3–7.

Petitioni Sociorum",[33] and to many other medieval commentaries on the *Isagoge* and on other works.[34] *C. The Axiomatic Method*. Before the introduction of Aristotelian textbooks into the universities during the thirteenth century, it was Boethius who provided medieval scholars with the clearest example of formalized reasoning as the explicit basis of philosophical discourse. Among such scholars, Alan of Lille has an important place. Alan's *Regulae Caelestis Iuris* begin by arguing that, just as every science has its own fundamental assumptions – for example, the maximal propositions of dialectic or the theorems of geometry – , so also must theology have its own ultimate principles (*regulae*).[35] Whereas the former exhibit only the necessity inherent in the regularity of nature, the latter embody a necessity unchangeable by action or nature. Alan continues by noting that Boethius had explained how these principles could be used to demonstrate other things while themselves being indemonstrable, and also how some of them were intelligible to all people but others only to a few.[36] Application of the term "hebdomads" (*ebdomades*) to the principles shows that Alan has the set of axioms in Boethius: *Quomodo Substantiae* 17–46 introduced by this term particularly in mind.[37] *D. The harmony of Plato and Aristotle*. Having outlined the project of translating into Latin and writing commentaries on all of Aristotle's and Plato's writings which he was never to complete, Boethius at one point summarizes his hermeneutic intention. This is to show that there is a certain harmony (*quodammodo concordia*) between the two philosophers and that, contrary to the view of many readers, they agree on the most important philosophical issues (*in philosophia maximis consentire*).[38] Boethius' statement obviously drew the attention of medieval thinkers to an important problem of interpretation. That it did not resolve the issue is shown by the contrary responses of John of Salisbury who denies the agreement in his *Metalogicon*[39] and Henry Bate of Mechelen who affirms it in his *Speculum Divinorum et Quorundam Naturalium*.[40]

[901] In the light of these methodological considerations, we may perhaps now turn to the headings mentioned earlier under which Boethius influenced medieval philosophical doctrine as such.

In preparing his polemic against the heretical followers of Eutyches and Nestorius, Boethius must first define the terms "nature" (*natura*) and "person" (*persona*). With respect to the former term he notes: *1 Natura* can be applied to *a*

33 At *Logica Nostrorum Petitioni Sociorum* 509. 9ff.

34 Boethius is a contributor to the general theory of *accessus ad auctores* which is of great importance to the field of hermeneutics during the Middle Ages. On this wider issue (taking account of the Boethian element), see Minnis, Scott, and Wallace 1991, 1–36.

35 *Regulae Caelestis Iuris* prol. 5, p. 122.

36 *Ibid*. 7–10, p. 123.

37 On Boethius' contribution to the development of axiomatic method during the Middle Ages, see Schrimpf 1966, Lohr 1986.

38 *In De Interpretatione, editio secunda* II. 3, 80. 1–6.

39 *Metalogicon* II. 17, 80–84.

40 See *Speculum Divinorum et Quorundam. Naturalium* VII. 2, 1–12, etc.

bodies and the bodily only, or *b* incorporeal substances only, or *c* all things that can be said to exist in some manner; *2* In application *c*, all things have nature which as existent, can be grasped by intellect in some manner (*cum sint, quoquo modo intellectu capi possunt*) – the phrase "grasped by intellect" allowing the inclusion of substances and accidents, the phrase "in some manner" the inclusion of God and Matter (which can only be grasped imperfectly through the privation of other terms), and the phrase "as existent" the exclusion of Nothingness – ; in applications *a* and *b*, a nature is that which can be active, passive (or both) (*vel quod facere vel quod pati possit*) – bodily things and the soul of bodily things having both action and passivity, God and other divine things having action only – ; in application *a*, nature is the source of motion in itself and not accidentally (*motus principium secundum se, non per accidens*) – the phrase "source of motion" referring to such things as the tendencies upwards and downwards of fire and earth respectively, and the phrase "in itself and not accidentally" to such things as the bed which collapses as wood rather than as bed – ; *3 Natura* can also be applied to the specific differentia informing each and every thing (*unamquamque rem informans specifica differentia*).[41] The most remarkable of the many uses of this Boethian discussion during the Middle Ages is the famous division of nature on which Eriugena's treatise *Periphyseon* is entirely based. Although he never mentions Boethius' name in this context, the fact that the author makes his fundamental division by combining the notions of differentia (as affirmative + negative) with the duality of active and passive (as creating + created) and by stressing that these are *notions* (grasped intellectually)[42] and then applies the division dynamically (as procession and reversion)[43] repeats too many of Boethius' points to be a coincidence. In fact, Eriugena only differs from his predecessor by applying nature to the existent *and* the non-existent (as supra-existent)[44] under the influence of pseudo-Dionysius.[45]

The question of how the categories should be applied to God is tackled in one of the most important chapters in Boethius' *De Sancta Trinitate*. Among many subtle changes to Aristotle's original theory necessitated by this novel application, the notion that predications in categories other than substance must be understood as signifying substantially or even super-substantially in the case of God is particularly suggestive. According to Boethius' argument here, **[902]** saying that God is good is equivalent to saying that he is goodness itself or above goodness itself, and saying that the God is great is equivalent to saying that he is greatness itself or above greatness itself.[46] Anselm of Canterbury expands this theory – which actually originated with Augustine – in interesting ways in his *Monologion*. He argues

41 *Contra Eutychen et Nestorium* 1, 59–112.
42 *Periphyseon* I. 1–33; II. 1–119.
43 *Ibid.* I. 402–533; II. 582–952.
44 *Ibid.* I. 674–884.
45 On the issues discussed here, see O'Meara 1981.
46 *De Sancta Trinitate* 4, 187–196.

that predicating quality or quantity of the supreme nature in the usual manner would imply that it is *x* through another (*per aliud*) and not through itself (*per se*) – a situation precluded by an earlier argument in his treatise. On the contrary, saying that the supreme being is just is equivalent to saying that it is justice itself and saying that it is great is equivalent to saying that it is greatness itself.[47] Anselm further concludes that when referring to the supreme nature as just or great, each predicate signifies the same as every other (*idem . . . quod omnia*), whereas when referring to a human being as bodily or rational, these predicates are not applied according to a single mode or viewpoint (*non uno modo vel consideratione*).[48]

Boethius had introduced into his theological discussions an important set of technical terms. These are difficult to translate definitively outside their context but may be rendered provisionally as follows: – in *De Sancta Trinitate* 4. 260–268 – *quo est* ("by which it is"), – in *De Sancta Trinitate* 2, 92–104 and *Quomodo Substantiae* 26–43 – *esse* ("[it] is") and *quod est* ("what it is"), and – in *Quomodo Substantiae* 29–40 – *esse aliquid* ("[it] is something"). The difficulty of understanding the interrelation between these terms – a difficulty increased by the potential distinction between predicative ("it is [*x*]") and existential ("it is [exists]") senses within *esse* itself – gives rise to numerous attempts at interpretation during the Middle Ages. Two contrasting thirteenth-century examples may illustrate this. On one side, Bonaventure seems to represent the typical interpretation of Boethius during this period – probably an accurate reading in the historical sense – in arguing that, with respect to some existent thing under consideration, the *quo est* refers to that thing's essence whereas the *quod est* refers to the thing as composite of matter and form.[49] On the other side, a transformation of the original Boethian position becomes the standard teaching of Thomas Aquinas. For the latter in most instances, the *quo est* – replaced by *esse* outside the Boethian context – signifies the "act of being" in the case of spiritual things and either the act of being or the "form of the whole" or the "form of the part" in that of corporeal things, whereas the *quod est* – replaced by *essentia* in non-Boethian contexts – signifies the form in the case of spiritual things and the composite of matter and form in that of corporeal things.[50] Aquinas here reads Boethius in terms of the distinction between existence and essence in Avicenna and that between the finite and the infinite in the *Liber de Causis*.[51]

[903] In *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, the final philosophical problem of the Boethian text: the obvious confusion of justice and injustice in the world, is partly

47 *Monologion* 16. 30. 1–31

48 *Ibid.* 17. 31. 21–32. 4.

49 *In I Sententiarum*, d. xxiii, a. 1, q. 3.

50 *In I Sententiarum,* d. viii, q. 5, a. 1–2.

51 There is an extensive scholarly literature on the Thomistic doctrine of the act of being and its background in Boethius. The standard treatment is perhaps still Roland-Gosselin 1926, 135ff. (especially 142–145). More recently the background of the Boethian doctrine itself in Greek Neoplatonism has been studied in Hadot 1963, 1970. See also Faucon de Boylesve 1975, 432.

resolved through a subtle analysis of the relation between providence and fate. According to Boethius, the former – equivalent to the reasons of things present altogether and simultaneously in the divine mind – and the latter – corresponding to the disposition of things by the divine mind in individual places and times – represent the union (*adunatio*) and the unfolding (*explicatio*) respectively of things that are the same (*eadem*).[52] In an obvious development of this terminology, several medieval writers use the Boethian duality of enfolding (*complicatio*) and unfolding *(explicatio*) as the preferred way of expressing the emanative relation between the first principle and the world. Examples of this usage can be found in Thierry of Chartres' *Lectiones in Boethii De Trinitate*[53] and – under the probable influence of such passages – in Nicholas of Cusa's *De Docta Ignorantia*.[54]

For the Boethius of *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, the duality of providence and fate also corresponds to the duality of eternity and time. Eternity is here defined as the total, simultaneous, and perfect possession of interminable life (*interminabilis vitae tota simul et perfecta possessio*), and is contrasted with perpetuity as the life of pure presence is contrasted with the life extending from past, through, present, to future.[55] Anselm of Canterbury makes use of this teaching within the complex series of arguments comprising his *Monologion*. Having established the eternity of the supreme being in the sense that application of the term "always" to this being is with reference not to continuity of times but to transcendence of time, Anselm makes a further deduction. If it is the same for the supreme being to exist and to live (*idem est illi esse et vivere*) and its being is eternal in the strict sense described above, then the supreme being possesses the eternity of life in the same manner. Anselm's conclusion – that the supreme being possesses the totality of interminable life simultaneously and perfectly[56] – is a *verbatim* citation of Boethius.

Boethius' discussion of the principles of music begins with an important cosmological theory. According to this doctrine, there are three types of music or harmony: the cosmic (*mundana*), the human *(humana*), and the instrumental *(instrumentalis*), of which the first or cosmic is subdivided into that among the celestial bodies, that between the elements in the cosmos, and that between the elements in the seasons, the second or human is subdivided into that between the soul and the body, that among the parts of the soul, and that among the **[904]** elements in the body, and the third or instrumental is subdivided into that governed by the tension of strings, that governed by the air in pipes, and that produced by percussion.[57] Boethius' cosmological theory fascinated medieval readers probably on account of its numerological tendency. Especially notable among the later

52 *De Consolatione Philosophiae* IV, pr. 6, 34–40.
53 *Lectiones in De Trinitate*. 2. 4, pp. 155–158; 2. 31, pp. 165–166; 2. 66, p. 176.
54 *De Docta Ignorantia* I. 22, 44. 10–45. 29; II. 3, 69. 1–13; II. 6, 79. 1–18, etc.
55 *De Consolatione. Philosophiae*. V, pr. 6, 9–29.
56 *Monologion* 24. 42. 8–29.
57 *De Institutione Musica* I. 2, 187. 17–189. 11.

responses are various attempts to introduce further the tripartite subdivisions, for example of the harmony of the celestial bodies into position, motion, and nature of those bodies, and of that between elements in the cosmos into weight, number, and measure of the elements. Also noteworthy are various attempts to determine whether the harmony of the celestial bodies resides in their speeds of rotation or the distances between their orbits and whether that between the soul and the body depends on some kind of structural affinity between the psychological and the corporeal spheres in general. A typical example of the medieval reading of Boethius' theory can be found in Alan of Lille's *Anticlaudianus*. Here, the original divisions and subdivisions depicted visually on the robe of a personified *Musica* are combined with conceptual innovations such as the idea of microcosm and macrocosm, the notion of contrariety underlying harmony, the description of consonances, and the problem of bisecting the tone.[58]

The concluding argument of Boethius' *De Consolatione Philosophiae* is framed by an important distinction between levels of cognition. His final task is to resolve the apparent contradiction between the necessity inherent in God's foreknowledge of human action and the contingency implied in the human exercise of free will.[59] Boethius achieves this by distinguishing the cognitive faculties of intellect, reason, imagination, and sense as a descending hierarchy,[60] by explaining that cognitive objects are comprehended not according to their own power but rather according to the ability of the cognitive subjects (*non secundum sui vim, sed secundum cognoscentium potius comprehenditur facultatem*),[61] and by arguing that the higher faculties comprehend the objects of the lower but not vice versa.[62] It is therefore possible to conclude that what appears to the faculty of reason as a contradiction between necessity and contingency may be resolved somehow by the faculty of intellect.[63] Perhaps the most dramatic development of this theory occurs in Nicholas of Cusa. This writer fastens on the association of the reconciliation of contradictions with the distinction between intellect and reason but replaces the reconciliation of the contradictories necessity and freedom with that of the contradictories finitude and infinity. According to Nicholas, whereas reason holds that an actual maximum can be attained and that there is no progression to the infinite, intellect grasps that an actual maximum cannot be attained and also that there is no progression to the infinite. This is **[905]** because the nature of intellect is to be the precision (*praecisio*) of reason – as that of reason is to be the precision of sense – and intellect is therefore able to modify the conjectures (*coniecturae*) made by reason.[64]

58 *Anticlaudianus* III. 386–468. On the issues discussed here, see Gersh 1996, 41–45.
59 *De Consolatione Philosophiae* V, pr. 3. 3–5.
60 *Ibid.* V, pr. 4. 80–88; V, pr. 5. 12–20.
61 *Ibid.* V, pr. 4. 72–75.
62 *Ibid.* V, pr. 4. 88–91; V, pr. 5. 21–37.
63 *Ibid.* V, pr. 5. 38–54.
64 *De Coniecturis* I. 10, 50–52.

In commenting on Porphyry's *Isagoge* for the second time, Boethius attempts to answer three profound questions about universals raised but not answered by the Greek Platonist: *1* Whether they subsist or are in the understanding only, *2* Whether they are incorporeal or corporeal, and *3* Whether they are separate from sensible things or in sensible things. Boethius explicitly follows Alexander in explaining that universals are incorporeal, subsisting in sensible things but being understood outside sensible things. He notes that this is the Aristotelian solution, included here because the *Isagoge* is an introduction to Aristotle's work, and that it contrasts with the Platonists' view. According to the latter, universals are incorporeal, existing and being understood outside sensible things.[65] Boethius returns to the question of universals in *Contra Eutychen et Nestorium*, where his proposed definition of person as an individual substance of a rational nature requires the clarification of certain of its terms. Here, he notes that the understanding of universals is derived from particulars and that both universals and particulars have subsistence (*subsistentia*) and existence (*essentia*) but that particulars alone have substance (*substantia*). This is because accidents depend on particulars in order to exist although the reverse is not the case.[66] Boethius also deals with the question of universals in an important passage of *De Consolatione Philosophiae*. Here he argues that the Stoic view of our minds as simply passive to external impressions is insufficient to explain how a universal notion arises and that there must be some more powerful efficient cause which recombines the divided and disproves the false with the true by returning to itself. In fact, our mind applies certain forms which it holds within (*quas intus species tenet*) to the external impressions on the basis of similarity of motions between the two.[67] Boethius' comments stimulated discussion of the problem of universals among medieval writers without providing them with any decisive solutions, the most striking evidence of this being John of Salisbury's survey of approaches which had been current in the twelfth-century schools. These comprise on the one hand, *verbal* solutions such as Roscelin's view that universals are simply *voces* (words as phonetic items) and Abailard's that they are rather *sermones* (words as semantic units) and on the other, *real* solutions such as Walter of Mortagne's view that they are *status* (modes of reality), Bernard of Chartres' that they are *ideae* (transcendent forms), Gilbert of Poitiers' that they are *formae nativae* (immanent forms), and Joscelin of Soissons' that they are *res collectae* (collections).[68] John himself goes on to reject all these positions in favor of **[906]** an Aristotelian solution similar to that outlined in Boethius' commentary on Porphyry.[69]

65 *In Isagogen Porphyrii, editio secunda* I. 10, 158. 21-I. 11, 167. 20.

66 *Contra Eutychen et Nestorium* 3. 194–220.

67 *De Consolatione Philosophiae* V, v. 4, 10–40.

68 *Metalogicon* II. 17, 16–107.

69 Boethius' discussion and its medieval repercussions are naturally examined at length in the recent general study of the medieval problem of universals in De Libera 1996, 128–175.

III The Latin Proclus

The influence of ideas derived from Proclus' works[70] – primarily the *Elementatio Theologica* but occasionally other texts in the translation by William of Moerbeke[71] – can be found mostly in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Of special importance are such derivations from Proclus as the placing of the One above being, the cycle of procession and reversion, the function of the first limit and first infinity, the notion of essential causality; the fourfold system of unity, intellect, soul, and body; and the triadic structure of being, life, and intellect. However, we should preface discussion of these points with some remarks about the indirect influence of Proclus on medieval thought before his actual writings became known and about Proclus' contribution to the development of philosophical methodology during the Middle Ages.

Before his actual writings became available in translation, certain ideas of Proclus had already begun to influence medieval thinkers anonymously through translations of other writers who used Proclus without citing his name. One example of this covert influence is the distinction between three kinds of whole – before the parts, of the parts, and in the part – stated at *Elementatio Theologica*, props. 67–69. This threefold distinction was applied to the transcendent form, the immanent form, and the abstracted form as part of the Byzantine writer Eustratios of Nicaea's defense of Plato's theory of the Form of the Good against the Aristotelian critique in his commentary on the first book of the *Ethica Nicomachea*.[72] Albert the Great read this commentary in the Latin translation of Grosseteste, and in order to mount his similar defense of the Platonic theory recast Eustratios' theory as a threefold distinction between universals *ante rem* ("before the thing"), *in re* ("in the thing"), and *post rem* ("after the thing").[73] Another example of Proclus' covert influence is the doctrine of a descending hierarchy of principles linked by emanation stated in *Elementatio Theologica*, props. 56–57. In his compilation from Proclus, which became known in the Latin world as the *Liber de Causis*, the Arabic author interpreted the hierarchy of principles as a sequence of causes in which each cause has a different relation to the First according to the level of power which it possesses and in which higher causes extend their powers beyond lower causes.[74] Albert the Great read this work in a Latin translation which is

70 Valuable studies on the impact of Proclus' thought during the Middle Ages can be found in Imbach 1978, Proclus 1982–1985, Sturlese 1987, Kristeller 1987, and Steel 1997. Bos and Meijer 1992 is a useful collection of essays dealing with Proclus' influence on Meister Eckhart, Berthold of Moosburg, and others.

71 On Moerbeke, see n. 78. The translation of the *Elementatio Theologica* was completed at Viterbo in 1268. A Latin translation of Proclus' *Elementatio Physica* – by a so far unidentified author – was also known during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

72 *In Primum Aristotelis Moralium ad Nicomachum* I. 7, pp. 69–71.

73 *Super Ethica Commentum* I, l. 5, 29. On Albert's doctrine of the three kinds of universal, see De Libera 1990, 179–213, De Libera 1996, 252–262.

74 *Liber de Causis* l. 1–5 and 13–18.

probably the work of Gerard of Cremona and contrasts its doctrine favorably with that of Hermes Trismegistus and others whereby all secondary principles have **[907]** the same relation to First and the First has the same relation to all secondary principles.[75]

Proclus also contributed to the development of philosophical methodology during the Middle Ages in perhaps three main areas. *A. The axiomatic method*. Medieval scholars were able to draw examples of formalized reasoning not only from the logical, physical, and metaphysical writings of Aristotle but also from Proclus' *Elementatio Theologica* in Moerbeke's translation. This work is arranged as a series of 211 propositions together with proofs and corollaries and illustrates the extension of demonstrative form to a large-scale work and also the application of this procedure specifically to theology, in both these respects developing Aristotle's methodology to an unprecedented degree. Berthold of Moosburg's massive commentary on the work defines precisely the discursive procedures involved, distinguishes the material aspect of the propositions themselves (the *elementa* as *hylementa*) from the formal aspect of the interrelation of the propositions (the *elementa* as *elevamenta*), and compares the discursive procedures with those of Euclid and others.[76] *B. The history of Platonism*. Proclus' *Elementatio Theologica* obviously impressed its medieval readers as a work of such singular method and content that its precise position within the history of philosophy had to be explained. Berthold of Moosburg does this by recalling the historical account of philosophy included in Augustine's discussion of skepticism, which stated that, as part of a strategy of defending Platonism against the attacks of Zeno the Stoic, the dogmatic teaching of the Old Academics had been maintained as a secret doctrine by the New Academy. According to Berthold, the contribution of Plotinus was to remove all the allegorical coverings (*integumenta*) beneath which the ancient Platonists had concealed their doctrines. The excellence of Proclus resides in his subsequent establishment of the ordering of Plato's propositions in the present book (*theoremata ordinavit in praesenti libro*) and in his use of the Dionysian doctrine of the soul's circular, rectilinear, and oblique motions in order to ascend to knowledge of the supreme good (*in notitiam summi boni*).[77] *C. The Primacy of the Parmenides and the Timaeus*. In addition to the *Elementatio Theologica*, Moerbeke also translated what remains of the Greek text of Proclus' *Commentary on the Parmenides* – later cited by Berthold of Moosburg – , **[908]** extracts from the Greek text of his *Commentary on the Timaeus* – later utilized by Henry

75 *De Causis. et Processu Universitatis a Prima. Causa* I, t. 4, c. 5. On Albert's use of the *Liber de Causis*, see De Libera 1990, 117ff. Albert obviously had some acquaintance with the text of Proclus' *Elementatio* itself, since he cites some of the early propositions in his *Summa Theologica.* However, he seems not to exploit Proclus' teaching or relate it to the *Liber de Causis*. On this question, see Kaiser 1963.

76 *Expositio super Elementationem Theologicam Procli* [Expos. tituli] 37. 30–40. 118; 45. 278–51. 491

77 *Ibid*. 37. 14–38. 48. On the historical and hermeneutic questions raised here, see Gersh 2001, 497–498.

Bate of Mechelen – , and the three short treatises on providence and evil – later cited by Berthold of Moosburg.[78] The emphasis placed upon the *Parmenides* and the *Timaeus* within this program of translation recalls certain ancient exegetical attitudes which will be revived in the Renaissance, and it seems likely that Moerbeke came to such an understanding on the basis of various suggestions in the two commentaries themselves[79] According to this approach, since the *Parmenides* describes all intelligible things in relation to the One while the *Timaeus* describes all sensible things in relation to the Demiurge, the two dialogues summarize Plato's entire teaching about the higher and lower worlds respectively.[80]

In the light of these methodological considerations, we may perhaps now turn to the headings mentioned earlier under which the Latin Proclus influenced medieval philosophical doctrine as such

Proclus' *Elementatio Theologica* begins with the statement that every multiplicity somehow participates in unity (*omnis multitudo participat aliqualiter uno*),[81] Berthold of Moosburg's commentary on it being divided into a *suppositum* consisting of three points and a *propositum* consisting of three points. In the first point of the *suppositum*, Berthold notes the disagreement between Plato and Aristotle about the nature of the distinction upon which multiplicity is based. According to Aristotle for whom unity is a transcendental, it is the opposition of being and non-being which grounds multiplicity, whereas according to Plato for whom unity – as the "One" – is above being and non-being, it is the degree of power which grounds it. Berthold's view is that the opinion of Plato and consequently of his follower Proclus is superior with respect to this question.[82] The second point of the *suppositum* concerns the distinction between potential and actual multiplicities, while the third point deals with the material and formal causes of multiplicity.[83] In the first point of the *propositum*, Berthold contrasts the view of Aristotle and his Arabic commentators that being is the primary formal intention with various Platonic views

78 Moerbeke was a Flemish Dominican who spent a number of years in Greece, eventually becoming Archbishop of Corinth in 1278. The course of his career as translator can be reconstructed from places and dates given in the translations themselves and from his known contacts with other scholars such as the Witelo and Henry Bate. We therefore know that he completed the translation of Proclus' *opuscula* at Corinth in 1280, his translation of Proclus' *Commentarius in Parmenidem* being interrupted by his death shortly before 1286. The list of Moerbeke's translations shows that his main intellectual interests were Aristotle, Proclus, and Archimedes. His one original philosophical work entitled *Geomantia* shows a strong inclination towards Proclus in particular. For a survey of Moerbeke's life and works, see Minio-Paluello 1974.

79 Although the *Commentary on the Parmenides* is briefly cited by Berthold of Moosburg, its doctrine is first exploited significantly in the later works of Nicholas of Cusa (beginning with *De Beryllo* in 1458). Meister Eckhart's concept of *negatio negationis* – which is sometimes said to be derived from this commentary – is actually quite unlike anything in Proclus. On the influence of the *Commentary on the Parmenides* at the end of the Middle Ages, see Proclus 1982–1985, 34* ff. and 561 ff.

80 This hermeneutic question is discussed in Gersh 2003, 144–145.

81 *Elementatio Theologica.* prop. 1.

82 *Expositio.super Elementationem Theologicam Procli* [prop. 1] 71. 22–74. 128.

83 *Ibid.* 74. 129–77. 209.

concerning the most primal reality. These are *1*. Dionysius' doctrine of the One not in the many (*non in multitudine*), producing all things from itself, and preceding the distinction between unity and multiplicity, *2*. Dionysius' doctrine of the One in the many (*in multitudine*) which takes various forms, and *3*. Proclus' teaching in *De Providentia* regarding the threefold distinction of Ones according to cause (*secundum causam*), according to existence (*secundum existentiam*), and according to participation (*secundum participationem*) respectively.[84] The second point of the *propositum* demonstrates that everything existent participates in the One, while the third point explains the different modes of participating in the One.[85]

[909] Dietrich of Freiberg employs as the foundation of his ontology the causal cycle of procession and reversion which figures so extensively in Proclus' thought. For example, he cites the teaching of the *Elementatio Theologica*[86] that everything which proceeds from another according to its essence reverts (*convertitur*) to that from which it proceeds (*procedit*) and then applies this to the relation between the agent intellect and the possible intellect.[87] He also cites the statement in the *Elementatio Theologia*[88] that everything which reverts according to nature makes its reversion (*conversio*) to that from which it also has the procession (*processus*) of its own substance and then applies this to the relation between the One and all things.[89] Dietrich's doctrine – which is developed at much greater length in Berthold of Moosburg's *Expositio* – differs from Proclus' original in important respects. For Dietrich, the association between the notion of a cycle of procession and reversion and that of an activity according to essence or nature is developed into an elaborate theory of essential causation. Moreover, the Aristotelian distinction between agent intellect and possible intellect invoked by the thirteenth-century writer plays no role in the system of the *Elementatio Theologica* itself. For Dietrich finally, the cycle of procession and reversion equivalent to an activity according to essence or nature takes on an entirely intellective character.

In the complex metaphysical system of Proclus, the One is followed by the first limit and the first infinity, which are then followed by being. According to the *Elementatio Theologica*,[90] a first limit in itself and a first infinity in itself must precede the being composed of limit and infinity. Several propositions[91] then explain that the multiplicity of infinite potencies is dependent upon the first infinity – one of the accompanying proofs adding that the first infinity is neither the One nor Being[92] – and that the infinity in beings is infinite neither to superior

84 *Ibid.* 77. 214–78. 252.

85 *Ibid.* 78. 253–80. 309. For an excellent introduction to German Albertist tradition – and especially to Dietrich of Freiberg and Berthold of Moosburg – see Libera 1984, 163ff.

86 *Ibid*. prop. 31.

87 *De Intellectu et intelligibili* III. 24. 2.

88 *Elementatio Theologica* prop. 34.

89 *De Intellectu et Intelligibili* I. 9. 2.

90 *Elementatio Theologica* prop. 90.

91 *Ibid.* props. 92–93.

92 *Ibid.* prop. 92, proof.

principles nor to itself. Further according to the *Elementatio Theologica*,[93] potencies that are more unified have greater infinity than do potencies that are more multiple. Thomas Aquinas explicitly cites material from this Proclean account in his commentary on two propositions of the *Liber de Causis* dealing with the same topic while introducing some specifically Thomistic changes in order to recast this teaching in a more overtly monotheistic form.[94] In his own discussion, Aquinas expresses general approval of the doctrines stated in the *Elementatio Theologica* that infinite potencies depend on a first infinity and that such potencies are infinite with respect to the lower but not with respect to the higher. However, he rejects Proclus' teachings that the first infinity comes after the One and before being in the order of reality and that the being composed of limit and infinity corresponds to the idea of being (*idea entis*). According to Aquinas, both the *Liber de Causis* and Dionysius teach **[910]** that the first infinity is identical with God, while the *Liber de Causis* explains that being here corresponds to the first created being or intelligence (*primum ens creatum . . . intelligentia*).[95]

Props. 172–174 of the *Elementatio Theologica* form the nucleus of Proclus' theory of intellection. In this section, he argues that every intellect is a cause through its essence,[96] that each intellect is identical with its consequents according to cause, self-identical according to substance, and identical with its antecedents according to participation,[97] and that every intellect causes by its thinking.[98] Berthold of Moosburg elaborates the important doctrine of the essential cause (*causa essentialis*) – a vertical causal relation between a more universal thing on one level and a more particular thing on another as opposed to a horizontal causal relation between two individual things on the same level – in his commentary on prop. 174. In the first point of the *suppositum*, Berthold distinguishes the different kinds of intellect to which Proclus' theory may be applied. These include the agent intellect, the possible intellect, and the acquired intellect.[99] The second point of the *suppositum* quotes with approval the statement in Dietrich of Freiberg's *De Cognitione Entium Separatorum* that every essential cause pre-contains its effect essentially and intellectually (*essentialiter et intellectualiter*), by means of its causal reasons, and in a more excellent and elevated manner (*nobiliori et eminentiori modo*), and also the statement in Dietrich's *De Intellectu et Intelligibili* that there is proportionately (*proportionaliter*) in every essential cause, just as there occurs in the case of the supreme Good, a certain boiling over to the exterior (*ebullitio ad extra*).[100] In the third point of the *suppositum*, Berthold notes that the

93 *Ibid.* prop. 95

94 *Super Librum de Causis Expositio* 16, pp. 92–98 and 17, pp. 98–99.

95 On Aquinas' "creationist" revision of Proclus in the light of the *Liber de Causis*, see Sweeney 1959

96 *Elementatio Theologica* prop. 172.

97 *Ibid*. prop. 173.

98 *Ibid*. prop. 174.

99 *Expositio super Elementationem Theologicam Procli* [prop. 174] 136. 10–137. 53.

100 *Ibid*. 137. 54–138. 79 and 139. 96–119. Cf. Dietrich of Freiberg: *De Intellectu et Intelligibili* I. 8. 1–2 and *De Cognitione Entium Separatorum* 23. 1.

theory outlined applies to substances which are intellectual according to essence but not to those which are intellectual according to participation.[101] Precisions to the doctrine are added in the first part of the *propositum* where the first point is that the intellects which are essential causes think all their intellective objects simultaneously,[102] and the second point is that the boiling over to the exterior is the proper end of the thing (*finis rei*)[103] – here Dietrich's *De Intellectu et Intelligibili* is again cited as authority. Further precisions are added in the second part of the *propositum* where the first point is that the intellects which are essential causes have an action (*agere*) which is not equivalent to motion (*movere*),[104] and the second point is that the diffusion of the sun's light is analogous with the boiling over to the exterior.[105]

[911] Dietrich of Freiberg places at the centre of his ontology a distinction of four kinds of beings (*quadruplex maneries entium*) explicitly derived from Proclus' *Elementatio Theologica*.[106] According to Dietrich, when the ancient thinker states that the substance of soul is superior to all bodies, the intellectual nature superior to all souls, and the One itself superior to all intellectual hypostases, he is referring to the first three kinds with their positive names but to the fourth with a name suggesting privation.[107] This last point is confirmed by three propositions in the *Liber de Causis*.[108] These state that the first cause is superior to every description, that it is above every name, and that it is bountiful through itself and to the greatest degree – as indicated by its unity.[109] Berthold of Moosburg's *Expositio* follows this reading of the simplified Proclean theory of the hypostases with respect to both the macrocosm and the macrocosm. Thus, the subject of theological discourse is fourfold as corporeal, spiritual, intellectual, and unitary (*corporale, spirituale, intellectuale et uniale*), while man in his constitution embraces the four principal parts of the universe (*complectitur quattuor partes principales universi*).[110]

In the complex metaphysical system of Proclus, the second term in the previous fourfold enumeration can be subdivided into a triad of being, life, and intellect. As explained in *Elementatio Theologica*,[111] being is prior to life and life to intellect, and each of these represents an un-participated term at the head of series of participating terms. A further proposition notes that all things exist as composites of limit and infinity through the primal being, have self-motion through the pri-

101 *Expositio* 140. 121–129.
102 *Ibid*. 140. 135–150.
103 *Ibid*. 140. 151–141.183. Cf. Dietrich of Freiberg: *De Intellectu et Intelligibili* I. 10. 2.
104 *Expositio* 142. 206–224.
105 *Ibid*. 143. 247–261. On the doctrine of "essential cause," see Mojsisch 1984
106 *Elementatio Theologica*, prop. 20.
107 *De Intellectu et Intelligibili* I. 4, 1–2.
108 These are: *Liber de Causis* 5 (6) 57; 21 (22) 166; 20 (21) 162–163. Dietrich's own numbering of the propositions differs slightly from that of the modern edition.
109 *De Intellectu et Intelligibili* I. 4. 2.
110 *Expositio super Elementationem Theologicam Procli* [prol.] 7. 71–72 and 23. 581–584.
111 *Elementatio Theologica*, prop. 101.

mal life, and participate in knowledge through the primal intellect.[112] Thomas Aquinas explicitly cites material from this Proclean account in his commentary on the proposition of the *Liber de Causis* dealing with the same topic, again introducing some specifically Thomistic changes in order to bring the teaching into greater agreement with Christianity.[113] In one passage he begins by retaining the subordinating relation between the three primal terms and identifying them with the idea of being (*idea entis*), the idea of life (*idea vitae*), and the ideal intellect (*intellectus idealis*) respectively of which the Platonists speak but then removes the subordinating relation between the three terms and makes them one and the same with God (*unum et idem quod est Deus*) in accordance with Dionysius' and Aristotle's teaching.[114] Elsewhere he emphatically distinguishes causality in the sense of creating (*per modum creationis*) and without the presupposition of another term (*nullo praesupposito*), from **[912]** causality in the sense of informing (*per modum formae*) and with the presupposition of another term (*praesupposito altero*), and then concludes that among the primary terms being is causal in the first sense, whereas life and intellect are causal in the second sense.[115]

IV Other Latin writers and Latin translations

In addition to the three particularly influential writers whom we have been discussing, several other secular, post-classical, and Platonic writers have a more limited significance as sources of medieval philosophy. With one exception, we are here dealing with translations into Latin produced in late antiquity or during the eleventh and twelfth centuries.[116]

The Latin "Hermetic" dialogue *Asclepius* is the translation of a non-extant Greek original made in the late ancient period. Because of its citation by Augustine and other Church Fathers and certain perceived doctrinal similarities with Christianity, this dialogue was extremely influential during the Middle Ages from the late eleventh century onwards. Of particular importance for later readers was the *Asclepius*' unusually emphatic combination of two ideas.[117] The first idea is that God as unity is identical with the totality of created things in the sense that all

112 *Ibid*. prop. 102.

113 *Super Librum de Causis Expositio* 18, pp. 100–104.

114 *Ibid*. 18, pp. 102–103.

115 *Ibid*. 18, p. 104. On Aquinas' interpretation of the triad of being, life, and intellect, see Fabro 1982.

116 In addition to the writers and works briefly discussed later, it is at least worth mentioning a few other late ancient figures who contributed something to the dissemination of Platonism during the Middle Ages. Of particular importance among these are Apuleius (who provided a biography of Plato which was used by John of Salisbury), Martianus Capella (who provided another curricular paradigm of the liberal arts which was much favoured during the twelfth century), and Servius (who harnessed the authority of Virgil to the doctrine of the world soul).

117 The impact of these ideas on medieval writers was increased by the fact that they are equally prominent in pseudo-Dionysius' thought. For detailed discussion of the latter, see Gersh 1978, 153–167.

created things not only pre-existed in God but continue to depend upon him.[118] The second idea is that God has no name because names imply a limited multiplicity and God is an infinite unity and also that he has every name because – thanks to his identity with the totality of creation – his name can be applied to all things and all things' names can be applied to him.[119] This doctrine is brilliantly utilized in order to expand Boethius' teaching regarding the application of the categories to God in Thierry of Chartres' *Lectiones in Boethii De Trinitate*.[120]

The *Commentarius in Somnium Scipionis* by Macrobius exercised a considerable and indeed unparalleled influence upon medieval philosophy through its summary of the famous doctrine concerning the One (or Good), Intellect, and Soul.[121] This presentation has certain peculiar features tending to identify its occurrence as a source even **[913]** when it is not explicitly cited. These include its routine substitution of the term God (*deus*) for the terms One or Good, its dissemination of the enigmatic name of *Tugaton* (= *t'agathon*) through MSS copied by scribes ignorant of Greek, and its derivation of Soul from the downward rather than the upward looking of Intellect. Given that Plotinus' doctrine of the three hypostases had never been stated fully by Augustine and that the Proclean variant of the doctrine was not available before the late thirteenth century, Macrobius' summary was for many years the only one available to Latin readers. It was most frequently employed – for example, in Bovo of Corvey's commentary on Boethius' *De Consolatione Philosophiae*[122] – in order to contextualize Plato's doctrine of the world soul.[123]

Among the writings which began to influence philosophical thought from the early twelfth century onwards was Nemesius of Emesa's *De Natura Hominis*. This work was known through two translations: one incomplete version made by Alfanus of Salerno before 1085 and circulated under the title of *Premnon Physicon* without indication of author's name and another complete version made by Burgundio of Pisa in 1165 and circulated under the title of *De Natura Hominis* with attribution to "Nyssenus" (i.e. Gregory of Nyssa).[124] It was also known through substantial extracts in the *De Fide Orthodoxa* of John Damascene – also translated by Burgundio – which was widely studied in theological circles. To cite just one example of its influence, Albert the Great derived six classic arguments against the thesis that the soul is a harmony of the body from Nemesius' *De Natura Hominis* presumably in the translation of Burgundio.[125]

118 *Asclepius* 1. 296. 11–13; 2. 297. 23–298. 1; 20. 321. 7; 34. 344. 22–23.

119 *Ibid*. 20. 320. 15–321. 9.

120 *Lectiones in De Trinitate* 4. 11, pp. 189–190. On the influence of the *Asclepius* in the Middle Ages, see Lucentini 2007, 71–222.

121 *Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis* I. 2. 13–14 and I. 14. 6–9.

122 *In Consolationem* p. 246.

123 On the influence of Macrobius in the Middle Ages, see Jeauneau 1960, Silvestre 1963, Hüttig 1990. Caiazzo 2002 is a study of an important set of twelfth-century glosses.

124 For information about these translations and translators, see Wicher 1986.

125 Cf. Nemesius: *De Natura Hominis* 2. 30. 71–32. 5 and Albert: *De Homine* t. 1, q. 4, a. 5.

William of Moerbeke translated not only the *Elementatio Theologica* and other works by Proclus but also Ammonius' commentary on Aristotle's *De Interpretatione*.[126] Thomas Aquinas subsequently made extensive use of this translation when writing his own commentary on the Aristotelian text, which, however, remained unfinished at his death. It is not surprising to find that, in making approximately nine explicit references to Ammonius together with numerous tacit uses of his predecessor, Aquinas exploits the latter's strictly logical observations to the exclusion of his metaphysical subtext.[127]

Also undertaken by William of Moerbeke around the same date was a translation of part of Philoponus' commentary on Aristotle's *De Anima*.[128] The earlier view that Aquinas employed this *De Intellectu* in his dispute with the Averroists concerning the unity of intellect – as originally argued by the pro-Latin Byzantine writer George (Gennadios) Scholarios – has been brought into question by the modern editor of the Moerbeke translation. However, there is no doubt **[914]** that Philoponus' commentary is employed as a major source in the *Speculum Divinorum et Quorundam Naturalium* of Henry Bate of Mechelen.[129]

A third translation by Moerbeke – of Simplicius' commentary on Aristotle's *Categoriae*[130] – was widely read during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Among the more important refinements introduced in order to harmonize the Aristotelian position with the Platonic one, the Greek commentator proposes various further distinctions within the category of relation. In particular, Simplicius makes great efforts to defend the ultimate reality of relation.[131] Elsewhere, he distinguishes a primal relation corresponding to Otherness in the intelligible world, and involving neither presence in a substratum nor duality of substrata, from secondary relations characteristic of the sensible world, being either inherent in their substrata and altered together with them or separate from the substrata and altered independently of them.[132] Simplicius also distinguishes between participated and participating relations.[133] Some of Simplicius' innovations in this area recur in the doctrine of Duns Scotus and of later *Scotisti*.[134]

V Conclusion

The evidence collected in this essay would indicate that, among late ancient philosophical writers, Calcidius and Boethius exercise the greatest influence

126 This translation was completed in 1268.
127 See Isaac 1953, 33–34, 98–105, 148–152.
128 The translation is of the commentary on *De Anima* I 3 and III 4–9. It was completed in 1268.
129 On this important late medieval Platonist, see Gregory 1961.
130 Completed in 1266.
131 *In Praedicamenta Aristotelis* 7, pp. 229–230.
132 *Ibid*. p. 237 and pp. 280–281.
133 *Ibid*. pp. 236–237 and p. 277.
134 See Duns Scotus, *Opus Oxoniense* I, d. 2, q. 5, p. 187. Simplicius' commentary on Aristotle's *De Caelo* also had some influence during the later Middle Ages. See Bossier 1987.

during the earlier Middle Ages (ninth to twelfth century), whereas Boethius and Proclus represent the dominant influences during the era of High Scholasticism (thirteenth century onwards). Other writings and writers of the late ancient period – the Hermetic *Asclepius*, Macrobius, the *Premnon Physicon*, and the Aristotelian commentators – may be understood as playing a significant role. But after abstracting the component of indirect Platonism transmitted the Middle Ages by the ubiquitous Christian authorities Augustine and pseudo-Dionysius, it becomes clear that Aristotle and Proclus are the two most influential late ancient philosophical writers and that Proclus is the decisive influence in relation to the specifically Platonic trajectory.

What are the most important ideas to emerge within this current of late medieval philosophy dominated by Proclus? Among the various developments noted in section III of the present essay, the systematic application of the axiomatic method to metaphysics, a partial return to the position of ancient Neoplatonism in elevating Unity above Being among the first principles,[135] and the tendency towards idealism implicit in the doctrine of essential causality are perhaps the most striking innovations. Ideas derived from Proclus' writings continue to influence major thinkers throughout the Renaissance from the *DCCCC Conclusiones* of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola down to the *Nova de Universis Philosophia* of Francesco Patrizi. On the other hand, that leading beneficiary of ancient Greek works newly translated into Latin, Marsilio Ficino, will replace or at least balance the authority of Proclus with those of Plotinus and Iamblichus.

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135 The return is partial because Proclus' doctrine of the One or Good must be understood by all medieval thinkers in conjunction with the pseudo-Dionysian doctrine of divine names, the medieval Aristotelian theory of the *transcendentalia*, and especially the Christian notion of God as Trinity.

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2

PHILOSOPHY AND HUMANISM[1]

[525] Scholars have grown accustomed to dividing the study of medieval philosophy into two segments on partly chronological and partly conceptual grounds and to using the second segment as the starting point for the analysis. Thus, "later medieval philosophy" is associated with the beginnings of the universities in the thirteenth century together with the relatively speedy adoption of Aristotelian methods and doctrines by the latter's faculties of arts and theology, "early medieval philosophy" being applied as a vague and generic term to whatever methods and teachings were cultivated during approximately seven hundred years preceding the rise of such institutions. Although one might also postulate a "transitional" phase roughly coextensive with the twelfth century, since this period is marked by the translation into Latin of the numerous ancient philosophical writings, long out of circulation in western Europe, which eventually formed the textual basis of the Aristotelian-inspired university curriculum, a division of medieval philosophy into two segments along the lines described is perfectly defensible. Nevertheless, something important about the nature of philosophy during the Middle Ages is missed by such an analysis. This concerns the question of hermeneutics which has become so important in modern philosophical, literary, and cultural criticism. As I hope to demonstrate in the discussion to follow, there is a strong case for dividing medieval philosophy according to the hermeneutical criteria applied at the time – and not without an implicit reference to modern hermeneutics – into two phases which might be termed "humanistic" and "scholastic," respectively. These phases should probably be understood as interweaving rather than consecutive, in that the humanistic approach is dominant until the end of the twelfth century, the scholastic tendency is primary during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries – although a kind of humanism persists as a secondary tradition within more "Augustinian" circles – and the humanistic approach returns to challenge the scholastic dominance in the early fifteenth century. The interweaving of the phases is reinforced by the fact that leading figures of fifteenth-century humanistic philosophy explicitly look

1 An earlier draft of this essay was delivered orally at Princeton University on 14 November 2006. The author is grateful to members of the audience on that occasion (especially Caroline Bynum, Calvin Normore, and D. Vance Smith) for comments which have helped to improve the final version.

back towards their twelfth-century humanistic forebears, somewhat by-passing the contributions of scholastics during the two hundred years in between.

[526] But a question might be raised about the applicability of the term "humanism" to cultural phenomena in general. Fortunately, the meaning of the term has been fully clarified in recent years by Paul Oskar Kristeller.[2] We must therefore distinguish: *1*. the expression "Humanism" (German: *Humanismus*) introduced by the pedagogical theorist F.J. Niethammer in 1808 in order to denote the emphasis placed by secondary education on the reading of ancient classics as opposed to practical or scientific pursuits, this usage also being associated retrospectively with *2*. the term "Humanist" (Italian: *umanista*, Latin: *humanista*), which occurs in Italian university documents from ca. 1490 onwards as referring in a strict sense to the teacher of a definite set of disciplines: namely, grammar, rhetoric, history, poetry, and moral philosophy and sometimes by extension to a scholar who applies ideas derived from the study of those disciplines elsewhere: for example, in natural philosophy or music, this usage also being associated retrospectively with *3*. the expression "humane studies" (Latin: *studia humanitatis*) revived by fourteenth-century writers like Francesco Petrarca and Coluccio Salutati from Cicero, Aulus Gellius, and other classical sources in order to denote the liberal or non-vocational education pursued by members of the Roman ruling class. The further question about the applicability of the term "humanism" to cultural phenomena during the Middle Ages – when the actual term did not occur – can perhaps be answered in two ways. First, an immediate historical connection between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance has been plausibly suggested by recent scholars who argue that the earliest writers in Italy to whom the title of humanist was assigned were in practice combining two authentically medieval traditions which had previously been separated: a method of the literary study of ancient authors earlier cultivated in Northern France and the method of official letter-writing known as the *Ars Dictaminis* long established in Italy itself. Secondly, there is the less immediate historical connection but not less compelling historical analogy assumed by modern scholars between the literary interests and textual methods of on the one hand, Italian humanists like Petrarca and Salutati together with earlier "proto-humanist" writers like Albertino Mussato of Padua and Giovanni del Virgilio of Bologna and on the other hand, Northern French scholars from as early as the Carolingian period such as Lupus of Ferrières and Heiric of Auxerre.[3]

But the starting point of the present essay is a comparison not of the humanism in the Renaissance with the "quasi-humanism" of the Middle Ages in general but of these two cultural phenomena with special reference to *philosophy*. Among the features which scholars have identified as being characteristic of humanism (in one or more of its stages of development noted above), one should perhaps

2 See Kristeller, "The Humanist Movement," pp. 21–22, "Humanism and Scholasticism in the Italian Renaissance," pp. 92, 98–99 and "Humanism," pp. 113–114.

3 There is a good recent discussion of the historical connections and the historical analogies between Renaissance and medieval humanism in Mann, "The Origins of Humanism," pp. 5–8.

mention here the general adherence to the Ciceronian ideal of combining "wisdom" (*sapientia*) and "eloquence" (*eloquentia*) on the part of both medieval and Renaissance humanists, the difference being that during the earlier period it is mainly eloquence in the sense of grammar which is combined with philosophy, whereas during the later period, it is eloquence in the sense of rhetoric which is more at issue.[4] More specifically, medieval and Renaissance philosophical humanisms can be compared and contrasted in terms of *a*. the relation between moral and natural philosophy – during the Renaissance it is only the study of moral philosophy which is emphasized, whereas during the medieval period philosophical humanism is concerned with the study of both moral philosophy and natural philosophy and perhaps predominantly with the latter[5] – ; *b*. the role of Platonism – during the Renaissance humanism occurs in **[527]** conjunction with the assertion of both Platonic and Aristotelian philosophical viewpoints, whereas it is the Platonic doctrinal position which is universally maintained by the medieval counterpart of humanism[6] – ; *c*. the question of anti-Scholasticism – during the Renaissance humanism is associated with both the endorsement and the rejection of scholastic approaches to philosophy, whereas the medieval antecedent of humanism represents an essentially non-scholastic mode of thinking[7] – ; and *d*. the relation between cosmological and theological anthropocentrism – during the Renaissance philosophical humanism emphasizes the pivotal role of humanity in both the theological and cosmological spheres and perhaps predominantly the latter, whereas during the medieval period it is only the theological sphere which is stressed.[8] It is easy to see from this summary that as characterizations of Renaissance and medieval philosophical humanisms criteria *b* and *c*. are closely connected and that in terms of all the criteria other than *a*, the humanism of the

4 On the Ciceronian ideal in general among the Renaissance humanism see Kristeller, "The Humanist Movement," pp. 25–6, 29, "Humanism," pp. 122–123. The shift from a grammatical to a rhetorical reading of the famous dictum about the combination of wisdom and eloquence reflects the influence of the *Ars Dictamnis* on Renaissance humanism.

5 See Kristeller, "The Humanist Movement," pp. 23, 28–29; "Humanism and Scholasticism," p. 92; and "Humanism," pp. 113–14, 125. Although humanistic methods were sometimes applied to other areas of philosophy, this must be considered as an extended rather than the basic form of humanism. See Kristeller, "Humanism," pp. 131–132.

6 Examples of humanistically inclined Platonists in the Renaissance are Nicholas of Cusa, Marsilio Ficino, and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola. See Kristeller, "The Humanist Movement," pp. 29–30, "Humanism," p. 136. For the Aristotelianism which remained prominent see Kristeller, "Humanism and Scholasticism," pp. 90–91, 99–103, "Humanism," p. 132.

7 Examples of anti-scholastic humanists are Petrarca, Lorenzo Valla, and Desiderius Erasmus. See Kristeller, "Humanism and Scholasticism," p. 90. For the pro-scholastic side of the equation, see the passages cited in the previous note.

8 This remains the most controversial part of the definition of Renaissance humanism since the notions of anthropocentricity, individualism, and subjectivity are often conflated in the secondary literature. On the theme of the dignity of man, see Kristeller, "The Humanist Movement," p. 32. Kristeller accepts individualism in the sense of expressing personal feelings in descriptive and biographical literature as one of the leading characteristics of humanism. See Kristeller, "The Humanist Movement," pp. 30, 104, "Humanism," pp. 126–127, 136–137.

Renaissance is a more complex and variegated phenomenon than is its medieval antecedent.

As in the case of comparable phenomena in the later period, medieval humanism is characterized primarily by its admiration for ancient literature. The letters of Lupus of Ferrières (early ninth century) show a medieval scholar at work in the process of collecting and comparing manuscripts in order to obtain the correct readings of classical texts, while the commentaries of Remigius of Auxerre (later ninth century) illustrate the medieval practice of composing prefaces to important works in order to show precisely how they should be interpreted. With respect to the philosophically inclined humanist of the early Middle Ages, a kind of canonical list of ancient authors and works can certainly be established. This consists of a group of pagan Platonic or putatively Platonic works: Plato's own *Timaeus* in the translation by Calcidius (together with the latter's commentary), book VI of Virgil's *Aeneid*, Cicero's *Academics*,[9] Apuleius' *On Plato and his Doctrine*, the *Asclepius* attributed to "Hermes Trismegistus," and Macrobius' *Commentary on Cicero's Dream of Scipio*; various patristic works reporting Platonism in detail: Augustine's *Against the Academics*, book VII of *Confessions*, and *On the City of God*;[10] certain patristic works whose espousal of Platonism is concealed by pseudonymy: the *On Divine Names*, *On Mystical Theology*, and other writings attributed to "Dionysius the Areopagite;" two Aristotelian works: Aristotle's own *Categories* and *On Interpretation*;[11] certain works expressing Platonic and Aristotelian doctrines from a position either overtly Christian or detached from paganism: Boethius' *On the Trinity, On the Consolation of Philosophy*, and *On*

9 The role of Cicero in the medieval Platonic tradition is a particularly complicated and important one, although its significance has not always been appreciated by scholars – one may contrast the situation with that of Petrarch whose treatment of Cicero as the pivotal writer (and as a Christian *manqué*) has been widely discussed. Within the textual reading-strategy of medieval philosophers, Cicero functions *1* as theorist of the relation between eloquence and wisdom (in *On Invention*), *2* as reporter of the Old Academic doctrine i.e. of Platonism (in *Academics* and *Tusculan Disputations*), *3* as cosmologist (in *On the Republic*) – in conjunction with Macrobius' *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, and *4* as theorist of topics (in *On Invention* and *Topics*) – in conjunction with Boethius' *Commentary on Cicero's Topics* and *On Topical Differences*. Cicero was also known (via Augustine) especially as translator of Plato's *Timaeus*. Obviously, the study of this complex reception would go beyond the bounds of the present essay.

10 There are also scattered briefer testimonies regarding Platonism in other works of Augustine such as *On the Blessed Life, Soliloquies*, *On the Immortality of the Soul*, *On the True Religion*, and *On Eighty-Three Different Questions*.

11 The situation regarding Aristotle's *Categories* (at least before the thirteenth century) is somewhat complicated since, although Boethius' Latin translation had some albeit limited circulation, the work was known indirectly through a work attributed incorrectly to Augustine entitled *On the Ten Categories*, through Augustine's autobiographical report of reading the text in his *Confessions*, and through material obviously derived from it in Augustine's *On the Trinity* and Boethius' *On the Trinity.* However, in the minds of medieval readers, this indirect transmission increased rather than diminished the *Categories*' influence.

Arithmetic;[12] and various works which are not explicitly philosophical but serve to contextualize philosophy within the system of knowledge: Cicero's *On Invention*, Augustine's *On Christian Teaching*, and Martianus Capella's *On the Marriage of Philology and Mercury*.[13]

The manner in which this literary material was put to work in the service of philosophy might be summarized as follows. First, the problem of the relation between the pagan philosophical canon and Scripture had to be resolved. The key work was Augustine's *On Christian Teaching*, which explained how the study of pagan liberal arts such as grammar, rhetoric, dialectic, and arithmetic – together determining part of the domain we call "philosophy" – could be justified on the assumptions that such arts either taught methods of speaking, arguing and interpreting which could be applied to or elicited from the sacred text, or else stated truths such as the identification of God with Being, the triune nature of the godhead, **[528]** or the immortality of the human soul which were "Christian" truths by the very fact that they were true.[14] To this synchronic account of the relation between philosophy and Scripture, a diachronic argument was sometimes added. Here, Augustine's suggestion in *On Christian Teaching* that the parallels between Platonism and Christianity were close enough to prove that Plato learned something about the Hebrew scripture when he was traveling through Egypt in search of philosophical wisdom had an impact on medieval perceptions.[15] Secondly, the question of the relation between the various parts of the pagan philosophical canon had to be clarified. The complicated answer involved dividing knowledge into wisdom and eloquence according to the proposal in Cicero's *On Invention*; dividing wisdom into theoretical and practical parts according to Boethius' *On the Consolation of Philosophy*; dividing eloquence into grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic according to Augustine's *On Christian Teaching*; dividing theoretical wisdom into theology, mathematics, and physics according Boethius' *On the Trinity*; dividing mathematics into arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy according to Boethius' *On Arithmetic*; and then mapping the entire system onto the sevenfold "harmony" of the three verbal arts with the four mathematical arts in Martianus Capella's *On the Marriage of Philology and Mercury*.[16] To this synchronic

12 There are also briefer scattered references to Platonism in other works of Boethius such as *On Music* and *On Division*.

13 For detailed accounts of the works listed and their influence during the Middle Ages, see Gersh, *Middle Platonism and Neoplatonism*.

14 See Augustine, *On Christian Teaching* II. 1. 1, 33. 29-III. 29. 40, 103. 22 for the theory of exegesis. Cf. Augustine, *Confessions* VII. 9, 101. 8-VII. 21, 112. 42 for the philosophical doctrines of God as Being and as Trinity. Cf. Augustine, *On the City of God* X. 30, 307. 1-X. 31, 309. 38 for the philosophical doctrine of the immortality of the soul.

15 Augustine, *On Christian Teaching* II. 28. 43, 64. 11–29. Cf. Augustine, *On the City of God* VIII. 11, 227. 1–228. 52.

16 This scheme is set out most clearly (sometimes using diagrams in the MSS) in twelfth-century works like William of Conches *Glosses on Boethius' On the Consolation of Philosophy* and Bernard Silvestris' *Commentary on Virgil's Aeneid* and *Commentary on Martianus Capella's On the*

account of the relation between the parts of philosophy, a diachronic argument was also added. Thus, Augustine's argument in *Against the Academics* that Plato had originally stated a doctrine approximating to Christianity, that it had been subsequently concealed, and that it had been revealed anew by Plotinus familiarized medieval readers with a cyclic notion of the history of philosophy.[17]

Admiration for ancient literature is indeed a feature shared by medieval and later humanism. But because of the relatively limited availability of Latin texts and the virtual absence of Greek texts, the medieval humanist's level of philological expertise was lower than that of his later counterpart: a weakness having a significant impact on questions regarding the authenticity and dating of texts and ultimately on the understanding of philosophy and its history. The enduring controversy surrounding "Dionysius the Areopagite" is undoubtedly the most striking illustration of this. Most medieval readers assumed that the theological treatises of the so-called Dionysius the Areopagite were actually written during the apostolic period, whereas modern scholars universally acknowledge that these works are influenced by pagan Platonism of the fifth century C.E., the process of historical clarification having begun with Erasmus and Lorenzo Valla during the Renaissance and been completed only in the nineteenth century. Now although some of the sharper medieval critics noted the generally Platonic character of the doctrines enunciated without necessarily understanding the specific variety of Platonism involved, this feature was explained by the formulation of various hypotheses. For example, it was suggested that the apostolic "Dionysius" had decisively formulated the teachings dimly adumbrated by Plato himself and that later pagan Platonists concealed these works in a spirit of professional jealousy and then attempted to pass off the teachings as their own.[18] Clearly, such historical misunderstandings gave the *pseudo*-Dionysius, with respect to the interpretation of the philosophical canon described earlier, an important and in some respects a pre-eminent position.

In light of the textual practices described, one might perhaps underline three features of the humanistic tradition within medieval philosophy as a whole.[19] First, medieval philosophical humanism is characterized by a belief in the unitary **[529]** nature of truth: all the authoritative authors and writings are held to exhibit such doctrinal agreement that one can always gloss one author using material

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Marriage of Philology and Mercury. However, the scheme occurs in partial form in philosophical works from the ninth century onwards.

17 Augustine, *Against the Academics* II. 13. 29, 33. 17–20, III. 7. 14, 42. 1–7, and III. 17. 37ff., 57. 1ff.

18 This argument occurs in the Greek prologue and scholia to Dionysius by John of Scythopolis, one of the Areopagite's earliest defenders. This explanation is echoed in the Latin West in the preface to Iohannes Scottus Eriugena's Latin translation of the writings of Dionysius. On the debates about the authorship and dating of Dionysius in the West, see Luscombe, "Denis the Pseudo-Areopagite in the Middle Ages from Hilduin to Lorenzo Valla."

19 For the editions of medieval philosophical texts to be cited in the following pages, see the *References* section.

derived from another. Second, it is assumed that the canonical authors and texts are doctrinally Platonic and therefore approximating to Christian truth, any tension between these positions being manageable in the case of more pedagogical authors or texts but more troublesome in that of authors or texts more technically philosophical. Third, medieval philosophical humanism is characterized by a belief in the alternating concealment and revelation of truth: such a historical hypothesis is obviously useful in reconciling the belief in the unitary nature of truth with the empirical fact of the periodic disagreements which have arisen among different philosophical schools. All three features of the humanistic tradition in medieval philosophy are actually dependent on the relation between Platonism and Christianity emphasized in the case of the second, given that the unitary nature of truth and its alternating concealment and revelation are themselves assumptions of both a typically Platonic and typically Biblical character.[20]

Medieval philosophical humanism: three phases

Of the three phases in the development of philosophical humanism during the western Middle Ages which we propose to consider in the remainder of this essay, the earliest might be characterized as "pseudo-Dionysian" – because of the pivotal role played by this author within the intertextual system – and exemplified by the work of Iohannes Scottus Eriugena (ca 815–ca 877). Eriugena was perhaps the most outstanding of the many Irish scholars working on the European continent under the patronage of the Carolingian kings and bishops and was celebrated not only for the writing of works based on the Latin liberal arts and Latin patristic tradition such as his *Annotations on Martianus Capella* and *On Divine Predestination* but also for his translation of Greek patristic works such as the complete treatises of "Dionysius the Areopagite" and certain writings of Gregory of Nyssa and Maximus the Confessor. But most important of all Eriugena's writings was the treatise in five books entitled *On Natures* in which he synthesized the teachings of all his authorities while transforming them in a highly original and personal manner.

Perhaps the most immediately striking aspect of Eriugena's philosophy is its emphasis on the logical-semantic doctrine of negativity derived from pseudo-Dionysius. According to the doctrine elaborated in *On Natures*, God can be understood and described by using an alternation of negative terms – *i.e.* saying that he is "not-X," – and of affirmative terms – *i.e.* saying that he is "X" – the negative terms

20 The three features underlined here are encapsulated in the allegorical figure of Philosophy who dominates Boethius' *On the Consolation of Philosophy* (one of the canonical texts listed above). See especially *On the Consolation of Philosophy* I, pr. 1, 1–24 where, Philosophy's countenance is of inexhaustible vigor yet seemingly not of our time, her robe of imperishable material yet torn in places. Cf. *ibid.* I, pr. 3, 14–32 where the philosophers who have appropriated the torn fragments of the robe (i.e. non-Platonists) are listed. When Philosophy speaks to Boethius, she refers to "our Plato."

being substitutable with excessive terms – *i.e*. saying that God is "above-X" – in that their negativity implies superiority or plenitude rather than inferiority or deficiency.[21] Because the negative terms do not involve correlative oppositions – as God himself does not involve a correlative opposition – whereas the affirmative terms necessarily involve such oppositions, it is argued that negative terms apply more truly to God and affirmative terms less truly[22] and also that negative terms apply literally to God and affirmative terms only metaphorically.[23] Eriugena bases his theory of "divine names" – which is subsequently shown to be an account of metaphysical realities as well as of semantic properties – on the alternation of the "not-X" and "X" mentioned earlier.[24] He extracts a list of such names from pseudo-Dionysius' scriptural reading – this **[530]** comprises goodness, being, life, reason, intellect, wisdom, virtue, blessedness, truth, eternity, greatness, love, peace, unity, and perfection[25] – and also assigns the names to the most appropriate Aristotelian categories: *e.g*. being to substance, intellect to place, virtue to quantity, and love to action.[26]

On Natures as a whole is based on a fourfold structure according to which God or Nature can be described as *1* "creating and not created" – the God who transcends his creature as the source of its being – , *2* "creating and created" – the God who is immanent in the individual causes of his creatures – , *3* "not creating and created" – the God who is immanent in his individual creatures themselves – , and *4* "not creating and not created" – the God who transcends his creature as object of its aspiration.[27] The fourfold structure of double terms also represents a dynamic cyclic process between unity **and** multiplicity both in the sense of a movement of *realities* from unity to multiplicity called "procession" and from multiplicity to unity called "reversion" and of a movement of *concepts* from unity to multiplicity called "division" and from multiplicity to unity called "analysis."[28] The fourfold structure can be simultaneously real and conceptual because the duality of *1* and *4* represents the unity of God who is alternately *conceived* as beginning and as end of all created things, the duality of *2* and *3* represents the unity of the creature which is *really* composed of participated Forms and participating particulars, and the duality of *1–4* and *2–3* represents the unity of God who is alternately *conceived* under his negative and affirmative divine names[29] The fourfold structure itself

21 Eriugena, *Periphyseon* I. 674–884. For an English translation of Eriugena's treatise, see the *References* section. For a general introduction to Eriugena's thought, see Moran, *The Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena*.

22 *Ibid*. I. 699–776.

23 *Ibid*. I. 699–776 and I. 800–884.

24 *Ibid*. II. 3142–3282. Since the divine names are closely associated with the second species of nature (see later), Eriugena also calls them "primordial causes."

25 *Ibid*. III. 124–474.

26 *Ibid*. I. 887ff.

27 *Ibid*. I. 19–42, II. 1–131, IV. 1–62.

28 *Ibid*. II. 36–83.

29 *Ibid*. II. 84–123.

seems to have been derived from two fourfold classifications of a similar logical structure applied to substance in Aristotle's *Categories* and to number in Macrobius' *Commentary on the Dream of Cicero*, respectively. The interpretation of the structure in terms of the cyclic movement of realities is clearly influenced by pseudo-Dionysius' *On Divine Names*, while the interpretation of the structure in terms of the cyclic movement of concepts is possibly influenced by Boethius' *On Division*.[30] Nevertheless, the combination of these different logical-metaphysical schemata and the elaboration of the relation between the real and the conceptual can be attributed to Eriugena's own creative genius.

The philosophical system of *On Natures* is also based on an analogy between macrocosm and microcosm. Eriugena here seems to combine the version of this idea in Plato's *Timaeus* – where the analogy is between the world soul and the human soul – and the version in Gregory of Nyssa's *On the Image* and Maximus the Confessor's *Ambigua* ("*Problems*") – where the analogy is between the divine sphere and the human sphere. He therefore argues that it is not only the divine nature in a primary sense but also human nature in a secondary sense which must be approached through the alternation of negative terms and affirmative terms and not only the divine nature in a primary sense but also human nature in a secondary sense which can be understood as embodying a fourfold structure of *1* creating and not created, *2* creating and created, *3* not creating and created, and *4* not creating and not created and as embodying a dynamic cyclic process between unity and multiplicity in the sense of a movement of realities and concepts.[31] The analogy between macrocosm and microcosm is not an addition to the doctrine explained earlier but an essential part of it. Thus, the *conceptual* aspect of the duality of *1* and *4* and the *conceptual* aspect of the duality of *1–4* and *2–3* both depend on the cognitive relation between the human microcosm and the divine macrocosm.

[531] The work of certain teachers of grammar in the Northern French schools during the early twelfth century may be considered as a second phase in the development of medieval philosophical humanism. Since the work of these grammarians embodies an unusually sophisticated intertextual reading of Plato's *Timaeus*, Calcidius, Macrobius, and other Platonic sources, the second phase might be characterized as "Latin Platonic." We shall here consider the leading ideas of three main figures: William of Conches (d. ca 1154), the author of commentaries on Plato's *Timaeus*, Macrobius' *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, and Boethius' *On the Consolation of Philosophy* and of the independent treatises *Philosophy of the World* and *Dragmaticon*; Thierry of Chartres (fl. 1121–1148), the author of commentaries on Cicero's *On Invention*, the pseudo-Ciceronian *To Herennius*, and Boethius' theological treatises, and of the independent treatises *On the Works of the Six Days*; and Bernard Silvestris (fl. c. 1130–1160), the author of commentaries on *Virgil's Aeneid Books I–VI* and Martianus Capella's *On the Marriage*

30 On the probable literary sources of the fourfold structure, see Gersh, "Eriugena's Fourfold Contemplation."

31 *Ibid.* IV. 590–726, IV. 898–1247.

of Philology and Mercury and of the independent work combining poetry and prose entitled *Cosmography*. Although these three writers make common cause in terms of their commitment to philosophical humanism, there are undeniable differences of interest between them. While William of Conches was more influenced by Graeco-Arabic medical literature and Thierry of Chartres more influenced by Boethian-Pythagorean numerology, Bernard Silvestris exploited both tendencies in a perfect blend of philosophical commentary and literary imitation.

Bernard Silvestris' *Commentary on Virgil's Aeneid Books I–VI* provides us with important insights into the character of twelfth-century philosophical humanism in an important preface. Applying to the Virgilian text an exegetical principle which reads Cicero's injunction concerning the combination of eloquence and wisdom in terms of Martianus Capella's precept regarding the marriage of the *trivium* and *quadrivium*, Bernard here identifies on the one hand the "poetical fiction" and on the other the "philosophical truth" running through the entire epic. The preface further states that the poetical fiction is the journey of Aeneas, narrated in an artificial manner *i.e*. contrary to the sequence of real events, with the aim of both utility and amusement *i.e*. by providing "examples" of morality and stylistics, and that the philosophical truth is the course of human life, narrated in the natural manner *i.e*. following the sequence of real events, with the aim of utility *i.e*. by assisting the process of self-knowledge, the relation between the poetical fiction and the philosophical truth being allegorical in nature.[32] However, the main body of Bernard's commentary, which further reveals that the poetical fiction culminates in Aeneas' descent into the underworld and the philosophical truth in the human acquisition of knowledge – the ending of the commentary in *Aeneid* VI being highly significant – produces what is nowadays termed a hermeneutical circle.[33] Given that knowledge turns out to be the curriculum of textual and authorial study which advances the knowledge of oneself and of God, and that this curriculum of study is based on the combination of eloquence or *trivium* with wisdom or *quadrivium*, then the ideal of knowledge advocated by the Virgilian text includes the study of texts such as that of Virgil himself.[34]

32 Bernard Silvestris, *Commentary on Virgil's Aeneid* 1. 1–3. 22. For an English translation of this text, see the *References* section.

33 For a full study of this topic, see Gersh, "(Pseudo-?) Bernard Silvestris and the Revival of Neoplatonic Virgilian Exegesis."

34 The present writer has always found it difficult not to interpret Bernard Silvestris' reading of the *Aeneid* as a subtle reversal of Augustine's reading of the same text in the *Confessions*. Augustine reads Virgil's text literally as a moment within the process of gaining self-knowledge, while Bernard reads the Virgilian text allegorically as equivalent to the entire process of acquiring self-knowledge. Augustine focuses on book IV – the narrative of Dido and Aeneas with its negative connotations of carnality – while Bernard concentrates on book VI – the narrative of Aeneas' descent to the underworld with its positive connotations of spirituality. There is another contrast between the two readings which cannot be attributed to deliberate parody on Bernard's part (and which also points to the difference between the earlier humanistic mentality of the twelfth century and the later mentality of a writer like Petrarch), namely, the association of Virgilian reading with a

In order to understand more fully what the twelfth-century grammarians thought "philosophical truth" to be, we should turn to texts illustrating some of the ways in which the doctrine of first principles within theoretical philosophy was handled. **[532]** William of Conches' *Glosses on Plato* represent the most important commentary on the only text by Plato generally known during the Middle Ages and proceed on the assumption that the *Timaeus* is a systematic study of four causes: the "efficient cause" corresponding to the divine essence, the "formal cause" corresponding to the divine wisdom, the "final cause" corresponding to the divine goodness, and the "material cause" corresponding to the four elements.[35] The first three causes coincide in God and are eternal and non-generated. They are indicated in Plato's references to the Artificer as source of being, to the Paradigm or Ideas in the divine mind, and to the Artificer as object of aspiration and in their turn intimate the first person or Father, the second person or Son, and the third person or Spirit in the Christian Trinity. The last cause corresponds to the physical aspect of the creature and is non-eternal and generated. The theory of first principles outlined in several passages of Thierry of Chartres' glosses on Boethius' theological treatises is perhaps more remarkable. According to Thierry's *Lectures on Boethius' On the Trinity*,[36] one and the same universe of all things can be considered in four ways: *1* "in absolute necessity" – in God where the Forms of things exist in a transcendentally enfolded state – , *2* "in necessity of complication" – where the Forms are unfolded above individual things – , *3* "in determinate possibility" – where the Forms are unfolded within individual things – , and *4* "in absolute possibility" – in Matter where the Forms of things exist in an immanently enfolded state.[37] Thierry's theory of first principles is remarkable because it strongly emphasizes that the presence of God and his Ideas in the created world is a real one – recalling the presentation of a Stoic-influenced Platonism under the guise of "Old Academic" doctrine in Cicero's *Academics* – and also that the relation between God or his Ideas and the created world is a conceptual one – recalling the fourfold structure of double terms applied to God or Nature in

generalized human biography by Bernard and the association of that reading with a highly personal biography by Augustine.

35 See William of Conches, *Glosses on Plato* 4. 60 and 32. 98–99 for summaries of the four causes. The detailed discussion of the efficient cause begins at *ibid.* 36. 103, of the formal cause at *ibid.* 43. 110, of the final cause at *ibid.* 48. 116, and of the material cause at *ibid.* 50. 118. The best philosophical study of William's thought is undoubtedly Gregory, *Anima Mundi*.

36 Following a widespread custom of the early twelfth century, the *Lectures on Boethius' On the Trinity* (as also the *Commentary on Boethius' On the Trinity*) circulated anonymously and without specific title. The modern editor Häring has convincingly established the authorship of Thierry and has chosen the two convenient titles *Lectures* and *Commentary*. On the philosophy of Thierry, see Häring, "The Creation and Creator of the World according to Thierry of Chartres and Clarenbaldus of Arras," Gersh, "Platonism, Neoplatonism, Aristotelianism," and Dronke, "Thierry of Chartres."

37 Thierry of Chartres, *Lectures on Boethius' On the Trinity* 2. 2, 154. 10–2. 34, 166. 5. Cf. the related scheme in Thierry of Chartres, *Commentary on Boethius' On the Trinity* 4. 8, 97. 81–4. 11, 98. 16.

Eriugena's *On Natures*.[38] William of Conches' *Glosses on Macrobius* represent the most important discussion of the only summary of Plotinus' thought available during the Middle Ages and pay special attention to the doctrine that there is a descending hierarchy of three principles: "God," the unknowable whose difference from created things can be expressed by the figure of the monad; "Intellect," a non-temporal principle which contains the divine Ideas of all genera, species, and individuals; and "World Soul," a temporal principle whose powers in relation to corporeal world can be expressed figuratively through numbers.[39] Plotinus' triad is treated throughout this argument as an intimation of the Christian Trinity, although it is emphasized that heretical language describing relations between the principles such as the reference to God as "creating" Intellect and facile assimilations of principles to Persons such as that of the World Soul to the Holy Spirit should be avoided.[40]

In order to understand more fully what the twelfth-century grammarians thought "poetical fiction" to be, we should return to the work of Bernard Silvestris himself. As we have seen from the earlier discussion of Bernard's *Commentary on Virgil's Aeneid Books I–VI*, one of the aims of the poetical fiction which complements the philosophical truth of writers like Virgil is to furnish "examples" of morality and stylistics.[41] Since examples are designed to stimulate imitation in the form of practical action rather than of theoretical contemplation, it was inevitable that Bernard would implement the combination of eloquence and wisdom with the composition of a work emulating the classical models. The result in the form of Bernard's *Cosmography* is arguably the high-point of twelfth-century philosophical humanism. On the level **[533]** of poetical fiction, this work provides a narrative of the actions of quasi-mythical figures in an alternation of prose and verse which recalls Martianus Capella's *On the Marriage of Philology and Mercury* and Boethius' *On the Consolation of Philosophy*. On the level of philosophical truth, it articulates a metaphysical analogy between divine "macrocosm" and human "microcosm"

38 The notion of a fourfold structure in general if not of the structure's constituent terms seems to have come to Thierry from Augustine, *On the Literal Interpretation of Genesis* VI. 10, 182. 18–183. 12. In fact, the question of sources at this point is an intricate one since Thierry is also combining *1* the distinction of "complication" and "explication" in Boethius' *On the Consolation of Philosophy* and *2* certain ideas about necessity and possibility from Boethius' *Commentaries on Aristotle's On Interpretation*.

39 See William of Conches, *Glosses on Macrobius* 3A, 165–169, 3BC, 170–181, 5AB, 204–206, 6A, 207–209, 6B, 210–220 for summaries of the three principles. At *ibid*. 6B2, 226 William establishes a partial link with the four-cause theory of his *Glosses on Plato*. Here, God seems to correspond to the efficient and final causes, Intellect to the formal cause. Thus, World Soul falls outside the scheme of the four causes and the material cause outside that of the three principles.

40 For God as creating Intellect see *Glosses on Macrobius* 6A, 208. For the assimilation of World Soul and Holy Spirit, see *ibid*. 3A, 167–169, 6A, 208–209.

41 See earlier, p. 532.

along the lines advocated by Plato's *Timaeus*,[42] the hierarchical theory of three principles – here called Tugaton, Noys, and Endelichia[43] – borrowed from Macrobius' *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*,[44] and a cosmological notion of humanity's privileged role in the universe along the lines suggested by the Hermetic *Asclepius*.[45] This last point suggests a new definition of "humanism" as cosmological anthropocentricity which will have considerable repercussions in a later generation of thought.

Of the three phases in the development of philosophical humanism during the Western Middle Ages which we proposed to consider in this essay, the last combines aspects of the two earlier phases and might therefore be characterized as both "pseudo-Dionysian *and* Latin Platonic." It is exemplified by Nicholas of Cusa (1401–1464). Nicholas had been educated in Padua where he came under the influence of Italian humanism and mathematical innovation and in Cologne where he was introduced by Heimeric de Campo to the Platonic philosophical tradition. During an unusually busy career as a canon lawyer, member of the Council of Basel, papal legate, and cardinal, he managed to compose a number of philosophical texts ranging in subject-matter from the political, through the metaphysical, to the mathematical, and composed in the genres of both treatise and dialogue. Nicholas' most widely known work is entitled *On Learned Ignorance*. Although this was completed at the relatively early date of 1440, it presents a full exposition of a philosophical system which does not seem to have undergone substantial revision during the writer's later career. This system is based on the relation between three *maxima* which are called "absolute," "contracted," and "both absolute and contracted" and are studied in *On Learned Ignorance* books I, II, and III, respectively. Although the three maxima are identified at the outset as simply corresponding to God, the universe, and Jesus, they approximate more to God through the universe, the universe through God, and the combination of the two as the problematic deepens.[46]

It is in connection with his study of the absolute maximum in book I that Nicholas appropriates the pseudo-Dionysian legacy. Following the method already

42 See the analogy between world soul and individual soul in Calcidius, *Translation of Plato's Timaeus* 32. 15ff. (Plato, *Timaeus* 39e ff.).

43 Bernard was no doubt attracted by the *recherché* character of these names. Tugaton corresponds to the Greek *to agathon* [the Good]: Plato's own name for the highest principle. *Noys* is the usual Greek term for "Intellect" and *Endelichia*, a term sometimes associated with "Soul" in the earlier philosophical literature.

44 Bernard's narrative is admittedly based primarily on the actions of Noys, Natura, and Silva. However, Tugaton appears at Bernard Silvestris, *Cosmography* II. 5. 3, II. 7. 5, and Endelechia at *ibid.* 2. 13–16 and I. 2. 167.

45 See the argument about humanity's proportionality at *Asclepius* 1. 6, 301. 18–303. 13.

46 Nicholas of Cusa, *On Learned Ignorance* I. 2, 7. 1–8. 17. For a recent English version of Nicholas' treatise see the *References* section. Watts, *Nicolaus Cusanus* provides a contextualization of Nicholas' thought in intellectual history. The best introduction to the philosophical problematics involved is perhaps Beierwaltes, *Identität und Differenz*.

formalized by Eriugena, *On Learned Ignorance* argues that God can be understood and described by using an alternation of negative terms and affirmative terms, the negative terms being substitutable with excessive terms.[47] It further argues that negative terms apply more truly to God and affirmative terms less truly[48] and that negative terms apply literally to God and affirmative terms only metaphorically.[49] Nicholas' reasons for maintaining the superiority of the negative over the affirmative method are different from his predecessor's. Whereas Eriugena had argued that it was the oppositional aspect of the affirmative terms which makes them inapplicable to a God to whom nothing is opposed, Nicholas now suggests that it is the proportional aspect of such terms which makes them inapplicable to a God to whom nothing is proportionate.[50] This shift from a more logical to a more mathematical style of argumentation is linked with a series of further innovations introduced by Nicholas into his theory. These include the identification of the negative moment with the mathematical notion of infinity,[51] the introduction of the privileged philosophical affirmative name of **[534]** maximum – defined as "that than which a greater cannot be thought" in the wording of Anselm of Canterbury[52] – , the situating of God both above and within the alternation of negative and affirmative moments – reflecting a shift from the *On Divine Names* to the *On Mystical Theology* of pseudo-Dionysius as source[53] – , and the introduction of the privileged religious affirmative name of the *Tetragrammaton*.[54] The most striking innovation is, however, the principle of "coincidence of opposites," which reformulates the alternation of negative and affirmative moments in a radical manner. According to this notion, opposites are reconciled at the point of junction between God and creature, these opposites being either on the side of the perceived object like maximum and minimum or on the side of the perceiving subject like learned and ignorant and either metaphysical like substance and accident or potency and act or geometrical like straight and curve or triangle and sphere.[55] The principle of coincidence of

47 *Ibid*. I. 4, 10. 1–11. 22, I. 24, 48. 1-I. 26, 56. 20. II. 5, 76. 1–8. Nicholas' knowledge of Eriugena is shown at *Apology for Learned Ignorance* 21. 2, 29.17–30. 1. For a comparison of the two writers' doctrines, see Beierwaltes, "Eriugena und Cusanus."

48 *On Learned Ignorance.* I. 26, 56. 5–12.

49 *Ibid*. I. 2, 8. 9–17, I. 10, 19. 15-I. 12, 25. 14.

50 *Ibid*. I. 1, 5.1–6. 24, I. 3, 9. 10–20, I. 11, 22. 1–24. 9, II. 2, 67. 7–17.

51 *Ibid*. I. 3, 8. 18–9. 28, I. 12ff., 24. 10ff., I. 26, 54. 19–55. 12, II. 1, 61. 1–65. 10, II. 5, 77. 7–23.

52 *Ibid*. I. 2, 7. 4–5, I.4, 10. 4–6, I. 25, 53. 10–13.

53 *Ibid*. I. 4, 10. 1–11. 22, I. 16, 30. 24–31. 12.

54 *Ibid*. I. 24, 48. 17–49, 2.

55 See *ibid*. I. 2, 7. 1-I. 6, 14. 21, II. 2, 66. 24–6, II. 3, 69. 1–13 (maximum-minimum); I. 1, 5. 1–6. 24 (learning-ignorance); I. 10, 20. 9–10 (substance-accident); I. 13, 27. 18–20, I. 16, 30. 5–18 (potency-act); I. 13, 25. 15–27. 17, I. 15, 29. 5–30. 4, I. 16, 32. 1–10 (straight-curved); I 13, 25. 15–27. 17, I. 15, 29. 5–30. 4 (triangle-circle). Nicholas will later venture some cosmological examples such as sun-moon at *ibid.* II. 4, 74. 16–21, II. 11, 99. 13–103. 9.

opposites, by suspending the law of contradiction within its sphere of operation, represents a profoundly un-Aristotelian mode of thought.

Nicholas appropriates the Latin Platonic legacy in connection with his study of the contracted maximum in book II of *On Learned Ignorance*. He hardly dwells on the theory of the four causes extracted from Plato by William of Conches: that is, where the efficient cause corresponds to the Artificer as source of being, the formal cause to the Paradigm or Ideas in the divine mind, the final cause to the Artificer as object of aspiration – these three causes coinciding in God – and where the material cause corresponds to the four elements. Nevertheless, he cites the theory briefly as that of unnamed "Platonists,"[56] contrasts it with the Peripatetic theory of causality,[57] and corrects any possible hierarchical misunderstanding.[58] Nicholas is more actively engaged with the theory of Thierry of Chartres: a writer whom he admires without knowing his actual name.[59] As an instance of outstanding philosophical thought in the "Platonic" manner, he cites the doctrine that one and the same universe can be considered in the fourfold manner in absolute necessity, in necessity of complication, in determinate possibility, and in absolute possibility.[60] But Nicholas feels obliged to correct this doctrine in two ways: first, by observing that the Forms comprising the necessity of complication cannot exist as a real plurality outside God himself[61] and second, by arguing that absolute possibility must be identified not with matter but with God.[62] On the theory of the three principles extracted from Macrobius by William of Conches: that is, where the unknowable God is expressed through the figure of the monad, the non-temporal principle of Intellect contains the divine Ideas of all genera, species, and individuals, and the temporal World Soul is expressed figuratively through numbers, he again does not dwell. Nevertheless, he cites the theory briefly as that of the unnamed Platonists,[63] aligns it with Avicenna's theory of emanation,[64] and corrects its obvious hierarchical implications.[65]

56 *Ibid*. II. 9, 95. 20–28.

57 *Ibid*. II. 9, 90. 17–92.5, II. 9, 93. 19ff.

58 *Ibid*. II. 9, 94. 11ff. For another application of the theory, see *ibid*. I. 21, 43. 10–17.

59 See Nicholas of Cusa, *Apology of Learned Ignorance* 24. 6–7 where an anonymous commentator on Boethius' *On the Trinity* (clearly identifiable as Thierry on the basis of doctrine) is singled out for praise. See n. 36. On the relation to Thierry, see also McTighe, "Thierry of Chartres and Nicholas of Cusa's Epistemology."

60 *On Learned Ignorance* II. 7, 81.16-II. 10, 99. 12. At *ibid*. I. 17, 33. 18–20 and I. 23, 46. 22–47.5, he notes the link between this theory and the teaching of Plato or Parmenides.

61 *Ibid*. II. 9, 94. 23–28.

62 *Ibid*. II. 8, 87. 21–88. 8.

63 *Ibid*. II. 9, 90. 5–93. 3.

64 *Ibid*. II. 4, 74. 28–75. 4.

65 *Ibid*. II. 4, 72. 23-II. 5, 78. 29. It would be possible to continue establishing parallels between Nicholas of Cusa and the earlier writers (especially Eriugena). For example, Nicholas exploits the cyclic process between unity and multiplicity and between multiplicity and unity, the notion of structure which is simultaneously real and conceptual, and the analogy between macrocosm and microcosm. However, these complicated metaphysical ideas cannot be pursued here.

Conclusion

In this essay we have been following a number of different threads, and the time has come to ask whether these threads can be pulled together into a bundle. The answer can perhaps be given in the form of a summary.

In the second part of the essay, we have considered some of the doctrinal issues which were central to medieval philosophical humanism, and we have seen that the **[535]** doctrine that God can be understood and described by using an alternation of negative and affirmative terms is of primary concern to Eriugena; that an analysis of God's relation to creation in terms of a set of causes called efficient, formal, final, and material, in terms of a real-conceptual structure of the absolute-determinate and the necessary-possible, and in terms of the hierarchy of principles called God, Intellect, and World Soul is the project of William of Conches, Thierry of Chartres, and Bernard Silvestris; and that both the doctrine of negative and affirmative divine names and the various analyses of God's relation to creation are of primary concern to Nicholas of Cusa. In the first part of the essay, we asked the question whether the notion of "humanism" – a term which has been conclusively shown by historical analysis to represent a curriculum of grammar, rhetoric, history, poetry, and moral philosophy during the Renaissance – could be utilized in order to distinguish one tradition from another within medieval philosophy. The answer may be discerned if we are permitted to analyze both the Renaissance program of humanism and the humanistic branch of medieval philosophy in the structural manner[66] in terms of the three conceptual oppositions of practical to theoretical, of grammatical-rhetorical to dialectical, and of Platonic to Aristotelian in which *1* the first term of each opposition prevails over the second and in which *2* the first terms of each opposition and likewise the second terms are interrelated. Now it is fair to say that Renaissance humanism definitely elevates the practical above the theoretical, while the humanistic branch of medieval philosophy occasionally does – something shown clearly in the case of Bernard Silvestris; further, that both Renaissance humanism and the humanistic side of the medieval philosophical tradition elevate the grammatical-rhetorical above the dialectical; and finally that Renaissance humanism sometimes elevates the Platonic above the Aristotelian, while the humanistic branch of medieval philosophy invariably does – something shown clearly in the case of Nicholas of Cusa. We can therefore posit a structural continuity if not a structural identity between the humanistic branch of medieval philosophy and the Renaissance program and a family resemblance if not a logical universal underlying the humanistic branch of medieval philosophy and Renaissance humanism: a hypothesis which seems to be well founded as soon as one considers some further aspects of the medieval philosophical tradition. Thus, in the second part of the essay, we have also considered some of the stylistic features which were typical of medieval philosophical humanism, and we have

66 For an example of a "structural" analysis of earlier medieval thought, see Gersh, *Concord in Discourse*.

seen that the doctrine that God can be described and understood by using an alternation of negative and affirmative terms in Eriugena and Nicholas of Cusa, and the analysis of God's creation in terms of a set of causes called efficient, formal, final, and material, in terms of a real-conceptual structure of the absolute-determinate and the necessary-possible, and in terms of the hierarchy of principles called God, Intellect, and World Soul in William of Conches, Thierry of Chartres, Bernard Silvestris, and Nicholas of Cusa consisted entirely of the grammatical-rhetorical manipulation of Platonic philosophical texts. In emphasizing the practical and the grammatical-rhetorical aspects to such an extent, the humanistic branch of medieval philosophy – in contrast with the scholastic branch – comes strikingly close to the modern hermeneutics practiced by Martin Heidegger and certain post-Heideggerians. In emphasizing the negative-dialectical aspects of the Platonism associated with such developments, the humanistic branch of medieval philosophy even exhibits certain affinities with the Jacques Derrida's model of deconstructive reading and writing.

A note on Petrarch

[536] Especially in connection with the second phase in the development of medieval philosophical humanism, it is perhaps worth inserting a note on Petrarch who was in relation to the slightly later Italian humanism "the first culmination, if not its beginning."[67] Petrarch's connection with our topic is based particularly on the fact that, in his voluminous composition of Latin poems such as the *Africa*, of orations, of prose treatises including dialogues such as the *Secret* and invectives such as *On his own Ignorance and that of Many Others*, and of letters, he exemplifies the full agenda of humanistic studies described at the beginning of this essay. From the specific viewpoint of philosophical humanism, we can detect strong doctrinal parallels between Petrarch's work in the fourteenth century and that of the Northern French grammarians of the twelfth. This conceptual association seems even more justifiable in light of recent historical research establishing clear empirical connections not only in the form of literary dependence but also in that of manuscript ownership between Italian proto-humanists and their predecessors in the French schools of Chartres and Orléans.

Petrarch's most philosophical work is the invective *On his own Ignorance and that of the Many Others*. This treatise is written decidedly from the standpoint of the indirect Platonism which we have seen to prevail during the Middle Ages, Augustine's argument about the close affinity between Platonism and Christianity providing the usual ideological justification. At one point, Petrarch mentions among the names of important writers whom Plato influenced Cicero, Virgil, Apuleius, Plotinus, and Porphyry – a list clearly derived from Augustine's *On the City of God* – while in other passages he makes explicit references to such Platonic

67 I borrow the phrase from Kristeller, "Humanism," p. 128.

works as Calcidius' *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus* and Macrobius' *Commentary on Cicero's Dream of Scipio*. For Petrarch, it is clearly Cicero who is the most important writer within this entire tradition: he teaches a doctrine almost indistinguishable from Christian beliefs in such works as *On the Republic, On the Laws, On the Nature of the Gods*, and *Tusculan Disputations*, although he occasionally makes regrettable lapses into polytheism. That the present treatise makes tentative approaches to the standpoint of the *direct* Platonism which will emerge during the Renaissance has naturally caught the attention of scholars. Thus, Petrarch raises the question of how many books by Plato are in existence in either Latin or Greek, praises the eloquence of Plato as a writer – a judgment presumably requiring some acquaintance with the Platonic dialogues themselves – and describes the Greek codex of Plato which he possesses but cannot read.

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3

THE FIRST PRINCIPLES OF LATIN NEOPLATONISM

Neoplatonism is undoubtedly a systematic philosophy.[1] A "systematic" philosophy might be defined as one in which *a*. everything that is discussed can **[114]** be derived from a single principle (or relatively few principles) and in which *b*. the "principles" involved are understood either *i*. in the ontological sense as causes or *ii*. in the logical sense as premises. Neoplatonism in general can be held to satisfy all these criteria except the last and, if one takes account of a work like Proclus' *Elementatio Theologica*, certain types of Neoplatonism might be held to satisfy the last criterion as well. What kinds of principle are characteristic of Neoplatonism? In the first instance, it is the threefold hierarchy consisting of the One (or Good), Intellect, and Soul that is employed by Plotinus as the methodological framework within which almost every philosophical question is tackled and which is presented in summary form in *Enneades* V. 1 and V. 2. We may perhaps concede a point to A. Hilary Armstrong who prefaced his edition and translation with an observation to the effect that the Plotinian writings make "an extremely unsystematic presentation of a systematic philosophy."[2] Nevertheless, in comparison with many other philosophies, Neoplatonism is systematic.

Historians of philosophy normally consider Neoplatonism as a variety of Greek philosophy, although there is also a parallel tradition of Latin Neoplatonism that exercised an enormous influence from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance. The aim of this paper is to turn aside from the usual study of individual writers, doctrines, and sources to consideration of the broader question whether this *Latin* Neoplatonism is systematic philosophy in the manner defined above.[3]

1 The term "Neoplatonism" will be used in the conventional way in this essay, *i.e.* as signifying in the first instance the metaphysical doctrine of Plotinus and his successors within the Greek tradition and by analogy the similar ideas derived from the latter by Latin authors of late antiquity. For a recent explanation of such terms as "Platonism" and "Neoplatonism," see Stephen Gersh, "Platonism, Platonic Tradition," in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2nd edition, ed. Donald M. Borchert (Detroit: Macmillan Reference, 2006).

2 *Plotinus*, translated by A. Hilary Armstrong, vol. 1, p. viii (Cambridge, MA: Heinemann/ Harvard University Press, 1966).

3 The method to be adopted in this essay will therefore be substantially different from that pursued in the present author's *Middle Platonism and Neoplatonism. The Latin Tradition* (Notre

We will first attempt a brief summary of what one might term "the doctrine of first principles in Latin Neoplatonism," the points here summarized being justified in our subsequent discussion of a group of selected texts. This doctrine of first principles consists of various ideas regarding the hierarchy of hypostases in general, of certain ideas concerning specific hypostases, and of various ideas regarding the causal relations between hypostases. The first two sets of ideas convey a relatively static view of reality and the third a relatively **[115]** dynamic one. They are complemented – as a kind of objectivity is complemented by a kind of subjectivity – by a variety of epistemological teachings.

The doctrine concerning the hierarchy of hypostases in general includes primarily the presentation in Macrobius' *Commentarius in Somnium Scipionis* of the system of the three hypostases of the One (or Good), Intellect, and Soul articulated along Plotinian lines. It is also represented by another system loosely based on the same doctrine but configured especially with a view to interpreting Plato's *Timaeus* in which there is a paternal god who has intimate relations to the Good, to Mind, and to the paradigm, and in which there is an equally close relation between a universal Soul and particular souls. This system is stated in a famous poem of Boethius' *De Consolatione Philosophiae*. The doctrine concerning the hierarchy of hypostases in general also includes a conflation of the classic Plotinian theory in Augustine's *De Vera Religione*, where the triadic structure of One (or Good), Intellect and Soul overlaps with a further triadic structure of Intellect, Soul, and Logos. Moreover, Augustine replaces the original Plotinian theory with two simplified arrangements: a structure consisting of God, Intellect, and Body in *De Genesi ad Litteram*, book IV, and a structure comprising God, Soul, and Body in *De Musica*, book VI. It should be noted that neither the pagan nor the Christian versions of the hierarchy of hypostases in Latin Neoplatonism includes any reference to the doctrine of henads or gods characteristic of the Greek Neoplatonic school of Syrianus and Proclus.[4]

Among the ideas concerning specific hypostases that are expounded in Latin writings of late antiquity, those dealing with the second hypostasis or Intellect are fairly prominent. In Augustine's *De Genesi ad Litteram*, book IV Intellect – assimilated to angelic mind – is characterized by the multiplicity of notions that it contains and by its simultaneous cognition of all its objects. In his *De Trinitate*, book IX Intellect – now assimilated to human mind – is characterized by a mutually implicative triad of partly substantial and partly relational terms: mind, knowledge, and love. In the writings of Macrobius, Augustine, and Boethius, the traditional doctrines concerning the un-knowable or ineffable nature of the

Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986), although these two approaches are intended to be complementary.

4 The only traces of this doctrine of henads or gods in the Latin tradition are perhaps in Martianus Capella's *De Nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii* where a commentary on the "Chaldaean Oracles" that is no longer extant seems to have been the source. On this point, see Gersh, *Middle Platonism and Neoplatonism* [n. 3], vol. 2, pp. 609–614.

One and concerning the distinction between universal and particular intellects (or souls) are reduced in importance.

[116] The doctrine regarding causal relations between the hypostases includes two distinct versions of a basic set of ideas in Macrobius' *Commentarius in Somnium Scipionis* and Augustine's *De Genesi ad Litteram*, book IV, respectively. Both versions see causality as having a fundamentally two-fold articulation: namely, a downward or outward motion of procession and an upward or inward motion of reversion. However, Macrobius' version follows Plotinus in conceiving several motions of procession and reversion as sequential, whereas Augustine's parallels later Greek Neoplatonism in treating several motions of procession and reversion as overlapping. It is notable that the causal relation between the hypostases in Latin Neoplatonism generally follows the model in which the cause confers on the effect what it pre-contains rather than that – most typical of Plotinus – in which the cause confers on the effect what it does *not* contain. This feature is clearly illustrated by the doctrine of enfolding and unfolding stated in Boethius' *De Consolatione Philosophiae*.

The doctrines concerning the hierarchy of hypostases and the causal relations between them are complemented by certain epistemological teachings. In Macrobius' *Commentarius in Somnium Scipionis*, the unknowable natures of the One (or Good) and Intellect means that we can depict them only by means of analogies. There are also important teachings regarding the distinction between the non-discursive thinking of intelligence and the discursive thinking of reason in Augustine's *De Genesi ad Litteram*, book IV, and regarding the determination of modes of perception according to the nature of the perceiving subject in Boethius' *De Consolatione Philosophiae*. Finally, in Augustine's *De Vera Religione*, the hierarchy of hypostases itself becomes dependent on the three modes of perception whereby the human mind grasps the unity-in-trinity of the highest God.

At this point, we will turn to a group of selected passages illustrating the doctrines of Latin Neoplatonism summarized earlier, taking these in a methodological rather than chronological order. Some of the passages represent compact statements of philosophical doctrine, whereas others constitute doctrinal threads running through longer texts. In each case, we will attempt to isolate a kind of philosophical nucleus or *philosopheme* that can be employed as a building-block in our attempted reconstruction of the "system" of the Latin Platonists.[5]

[117] The term *philosopheme* has become relatively common in late twentieth-century French philosophy (*e.g.* in that of Derrida). Originating in the context of structuralism, where it is analogous with the *mytheme* discussed by social anthropologists or the *sememe* invoked by semioticians, the *philosopheme* is a kind of minimal unit of philosophical discussion. It differs from the "doctrine" to which

5 The deeper semantic implications of studying medieval philosophy in terms of *philosophemes* have been explored in the present author's *Concord in Discourse. Harmonics and Semiotics in Late Classical and Early Medieval Platonism* (Mouton-De Gruyter, 1996). See especially the methodological remarks on pp. 13–21.

historians of philosophy normally refer in two main respects: *1*. It does not have to be entirely conscious on the part of the writers who employ it (as a doctrine is normally assumed to be), and *2*. it does not have to be capable of demonstrative formulation (as a doctrine is at least by aspiration). Thus, *philosophemes* can appear (and disappear) or be emphasized (and *de*-emphasized) as the author weaves his discourse in crossing the boundaries between logical argument and semantic association.

1. Boethius: *De Consolatione Philosophiae*[6]

The first philosopheme is drawn from Boethius' *De Consolatione Philosophiae*. In the ninth verse of book III especially, the writer presents a complete cosmological doctrine of Neoplatonic provenance which is explicitly attributed to Plato himself. This explicit attribution is made when he cites the injunction to call upon God's assistance with the words "as it pleases our Plato in the *Timaeus*"[7] near the end of the preceding text.

The cosmological summary in *DCP* III, verse 9 deals with the dynamic-logical causal principles underlying the structure of reality in the manner typical of post-Plotinian thought. Given a hierarchical relationship between any cause and its effect or product, causation involves an initial "remaining" constituting stability or identity between cause and effect, followed by a "procession" or motion of differentiation between cause and effect, and followed by a "reversion" or motion of assimilation between cause and effect. Boethius refers to the first moment by speaking of the Father of the cosmos as "remaining stable" (*stabilis manens*),[8] to the second by describing him as "ordering to go" (*ire iubere*), as "conferring motion on all things" (*dare cuncta moveri*), and as "leading all things from a higher paradigm" (*cuncta superno ducere ab* **[118]** *exemplo*),[9] and to the third by speaking of him as "making things return towards him" (*conversas facere reverti*).[10]

DCP III, verse 9 where the cause is God (or *a* god)[11] and the effects or products are souls and physical objects, and where the dynamic aspects of the remaining, procession, and reversion are most prominent should be compared with two further texts in which the logical aspects of the remaining, procession, and reversion are also apparent. The first text is *DCP* IV, prose 6 where the cause is Providence and the effect or product is Fate. At one point in this argument, Boethius speaks

6 Boethius, *De Consolatione Philosophiae, Opuscula Theologica*, ed. Claudio Moreschini, BT (München–Leipzig: K. G. Saur, 2005).

7 *DCP* III, pr. 9, 94–95 *uti in Timaeo Platoni . . . nostro placet*.

8 *DCP* III, m. 9, 3.

9 *DCP* III, m. 9, 3, 6–7.

10 *DCP* III, m. 9, 21. The reference here is specifically to souls.

11 The interpretation adopted here would depend on the extent to which Boethius is seen as continuing to speak within the register of Plato's teaching – referring to the "Demiurge" (*dēmiourgos*) of the *Timaeus* – or already modifying the latter in the direction of Christian monotheism.

of the first moment by observing that the unity of Providence and the multiplicity of Fate are in a certain sense "identical" (*eadem*) and of the second by observing that this unity and multiplicity are "different" (*diversa*), although "one depends on the other" (*alterum pendet ex altero*).[12] The second text is *DCP* IV, verse 6 where the cause is the Creator God (or *a* producing god) and the effects or products are created things in general. Towards the end of this verse, Boethius speaks of the third moment by noting that things have continuance only to the extent that they exhibit a "shared" (*communis*) love whereby they flow back to the cause that gave them being with a return of that love.[13]

The cosmological summary of *DCP* III, verse 9 adopts a kind of post-Plotinian interpretation of the structure of reality itself that is underpinned by the dynamic-logical causal principles described.[14] According to this viewpoint, there is a hierarchical order of terms comprising God (or *a* god), Soul and souls, Body and bodies, and Matter – the first three terms presumably being substantial in character – and in this hierarchy, God (or *a* god) is the cause of all the subsequent terms; Boethius refers to this god as the "Father" (*pater*) **[119]** who has an unspecified but intimate relation to the Good.[15] He is characterized as "the instantiated Form of the supreme Good" (*insita summi forma boni*) and perhaps as himself the "fount of goodness" (*fons boni*).[16] The writer also refers to this paternal god's unspecified but intimate relation to intellect and reason. He is characterized as "the deep Mind" (*mens profunda*) and as the one who "governs all things with reason" – perhaps "*his* reason" – (*ratione gubernare*) and "sustains things with mind" – perhaps "*his* mind" – (*mente gerere*).[17] Boethius further refers to this paternal god's unspecified but intimate relation to the paradigm by speaking of him as "leading things from the exemplar" (*ducere ab exemplo*).[18] The metaphysical characterizations of Soul, Body, and Matter are less detailed. Soul is characterized either singly as "the mediate soul of threefold nature" (*triplicis media naturae anima*) or collectively as "souls and lesser lives" (*animae vitaeque minores*),[19] whereas Body and Matter appear in the text as "the elements" (*elementa*) and as "flowing matter" (*materia fluitans*) respectively.[20]

12 *DCP* IV, pr. 6, 34–42.

13 *DCP* IV, m. 6, 44–48.

14 On the question of Boethius' dependence on the Latin tradition of Platonism (as represented by Calcidius, Macrobius, and Martianus Capella), see Béatrice Bakhouche, "Boèce et le Timée," in *Boèce et la Chaîne des Savoirs. Actes du Colloque International de la Fondation Singer-Polignac, Paris 8–12 juin 1999*, ed. A. Galonnier (Louvain-la-Neuve, Paris: Éditions de l'Institut Supérieur de Philosophie/Peeters, 2003), pp. 5–22. For Boethius' dependence on the Greek tradition, see later.

15 *DCP* III, m. 9, 22.

16 *DCP* III, m. 9, 5, 23.

17 *DCP* III, m. 9, 1, 8, 16.

18 *DCP* III, m. 9, 7.

19 *DCP* III, m. 9, 13–14, 18.

20 *DCP* III, m. 9, 5, 10.

It is perhaps only because Boethius' dependence on Proclus has been established beyond reasonable doubt with respect to both the doctrine of Providence and Fate in *DCP* IV, prose 6 and the teaching regarding Love in *DCP* IV, verse 6 that we are really justified in treating the cosmology of *DCP* III, verse 9 as a summary not of Plato's *Timaeus* but of Proclus' commentary on that dialogue.[21] The dependence on the later Platonist explains the highly schematic presentation of the dynamic-logical causal principles underlying the structure of reality itself. However, the hierarchical order of terms underpinned by these dynamic-logical causal principles is much simpler than that **[120]** assumed in Proclus' commentary. Here as elsewhere, Boethius seems to be reducing the complex hierarchy of his pagan source – where the Demiurge/Zeus is the third intellect of the intellectual order of gods and is preceded by the One or Good and the higher divine orders and followed by the hyper-cosmic gods and the lower divine orders – to the simpler arrangement standardized in Augustine's writings.

2. Augustine: *De Genesi ad Litteram*, book IV[22]

In book IV of *De Genesi ad Litteram*, Augustine outlines a theory of angelic cognition that is designed to explain the six days of creation. The theory is clearly inspired by certain Neoplatonic metaphysical ideas, although, since it evolves strictly in response to certain problems of biblical exegesis, it is nowhere explicitly associated with either Plato or a later Platonist.

Augustine states the first exegetical problem as follows. Since the book of *Genesis* refers to an alternation of day and night before the making of the heavenly bodies on whose motion this alternation depends, the "day" referred to must correspond not to the movement of corporeal light around the earth but to the conversion of a spiritual light towards God.[23] The latter motion must represent the angels' reception of form. Moreover, since the sacred writer speaks of creation as having taken place in six of these days and as involving also the evening and morning of each day, the nature of the spiritual light's conversion must be specified according to some modalities corresponding to these phases. Augustine explains his theory in

21 The relationship between the two texts was correctly understood although perhaps not sufficiently demonstrated by Friedrich Klingner, *De Boethii consolatione philosophiae* (Berlin 1921, repr. Hildesheim: Weidmann, 2005), pp. 38–67. For further elaboration of the theory that Boethius is primarily dependent on Proclus for the Platonism of this hymn, see Werner Beierwaltes, "Trost im Begriff. Zu Boethius' Hymnus 'O qui perpetua mundum ratione gubernas,'" in *Commentatio Fidei. Festschrift für Eugen Biser zum 65. Geburtstag*, eds. H. Bürkle, G. Becker (Regensburg: Pustet, 1983), pp. 241–251. More recently, Jean-Luc Solère, "Bien, cercles et hebdomades. Formes et raisonnement chez Boèce et Proclus," in *Boèce ou la Chaîne des Savoirs* [n. 14], pp. 55–110 has argued persuasively for a more extended range of metaphysical and methodological parallels between Proclus and Boethius.

22 [Augustinus] *De Genesi ad Litteram*, ed. Joseph Zycha, CSEL 28/1, Wien: Tempsky 1894.

23 *DGAL* IV. 22. 39.

more detail with respect to the first three days.[24] The first day represents the angelic light's knowledge of itself received "from the Word of God" (*de verbo dei*), the evening of the first day the light's knowledge of itself "in its own nature" (*in natura ipsius*), and the morning of the second day the light's knowledge of itself "for the purpose of praising God" (*ad laudandum deum*).[25] The second day represents the angelic light's knowledge of the next thing in the order of creation received from the **[121]** Word of God – *i.e.* the firmament – , the evening of the second day the light's knowledge of the firmament in the latter's own nature, and the morning of the third day the light's knowledge of the firmament for the purpose of praising God. The third day represents the angelic light's knowledge of the next thing in the order of creation received from the Word of God – *i.e* the water and dry land – , the evening of the third day the light's knowledge of the water and dry land in the latter's own nature, and the morning of the fourth day the light's knowledge of the water and dry land for the purpose of praising God.

The second exegetical problem arises from the fact that *Genesis* 1. 1–31 speaks of God as having created the world in six days, whereas *Ecclesiasticus* 18. 1 speaks of him as having created all things together.[26] Augustine introduces this problem by considering a hypothetical objection to the effect that the angelic knowledge does not consist of three phases but grasps everything in simultaneity. Having granted that the angels themselves do have simultaneous cognition *at the present time*, he argues that their knowledge consisted of the three phases *at the time of creation*[27] on the grounds first, that there must be an "order" (*ordo*) and "connection" (*connexio*) among prior and posterior causes and second, that it is necessary that "things to be known" (*cognoscenda*) precede "knowledge" (*cognitio*).[28] In order to understand the account of creation in *Genesis*, we must therefore accept both the sequential and the simultaneous accounts of angelic knowledge as equally true: a position recommended by the fact that, if our vision seems to grasp a distant object in instantaneity, although in reality executing a

24 See *DGAL* IV. 22. 39 for discussion of the second and third moments and for the first three days in the sixfold sequence. See *DGAL* IV. 24. 41, IV. 26. 43, IV. 29. 46, IV. 31. 48, IV. 32. 49–50 for summary statements of the three moments. I have combined these accounts in my paraphrase of Augustine's doctrine.

25 At *DGAL* IV. 22. 39 Augustine further explains that the morning of each day is a "returning of the light" (*conversio lucis*) and at *DGAL* IV. 24. 41 that the evening of each day is a "looking downwards" (*insuper despicere*).

26 *DGAL* IV. 33. 52.

27 *DGAL* IV. 29. 46 and IV. 31. 48.

28 *DGAL* IV. 32. 49. There is a further argument that briefly alludes to Augustine's doctrine developed at *DGAL* II. 6. 10-II. 8. 19 to the effect that God's *temporal* creation of the world consists of four phases: *1*. production of the things to be made in the Word, *2*. production of the things to be made in angelic knowledge, *3*. production of the things to be made in actuality, and *4*. God's satisfaction with his work. The three phases of angelic knowledge therefore mirror and intersect with the four phases of actual creation.

spatial and temporal movement, this will be even more true of our mind's gaze and the angelic knowledge.[29]

Augustine's explanation of the angelic knowledge of created things is a clever adaptation of pagan Neoplatonic doctrine. Whereas Plotinus had **[122]** understood Intellect as a unity-in-multiplicity established with a tendency to turn towards the One, Augustine explains the collectivity of angelic minds as a unity-in-multiplicity created together with a tendency to turn towards God.[30] Of course, the significant shifts between the pagan and the Christian theory cannot be ignored. Whereas Plotinus distinguishes the sequential movement of Intellect with respect to the One from Intellect's simultaneous understanding of all its intelligible objects,[31] Augustine treats the sequential movements of the angelic minds as modalities of their simultaneous understanding of created things as such.

3. Augustine: *De Trinitate*, book IX[32]

Book IX of Augustine's *De Trinitate* is devoted to the study of the trinity of "mind" (*mens*), "knowledge" (*notitia*), and "love" (*amor*) in the human soul. Having stated at the outset that our faith in the higher Trinity must be the foundation for any understanding of the psychological Trinity,[33] Augustine argues that his earlier analysis of love as consisting of three terms: "lover" (*amans*), "beloved" (*quod amatur*), and "love" (*amor*) must be understood as applying not to the higher Trinity but to its inferior image and also as applying not to something corporeal but to the mind itself.[34] He further argues that, since there are two things involved in the mind's loving of itself – mind and love – and also two things involved in the mind's knowing of itself – mind and knowledge – , there is a trinity of mind, knowledge, and love.[35] But here, love and knowledge are not in the mind as accidents in a substance, or as parts of a whole, or as components of a mixture. In the first case, they would not be able to extend

29 *DGAL* IV. 34. 54. At one point, Augustine seems to go beyond advocating our acceptance of both the positions *a.* that the angels have sequential knowledge and *b.* that the angels have simultaneous knowledge to recommending our acceptance of the hypothesis *c.* that the angels themselves have *simultaneously sequential* knowledge. See *DGAL* IV. 33. 51–52 and IV. 35. 56. Position *c.* is supported with the analogy of evening and morning being at different times in different parts of the world. See *DGAL* IV. 30. 47.

30 The metaphysical character of Augustine's doctrine is shown unmistakably by his statement that creation takes place not in a corporeal circuit but "in spiritual knowledge" (*cognitione spiritali*), the entire process being according not to time but to "spiritual power" (*potentia spiritalis*). See *DGAL* IV. 26. 43 and IV. 32. 49.

31 For example, see *Enn.* V. 1. 5, 3–19; V. 1. 6, 37–45; V. 2. 1, 5–11, for the former and *Enn.* V. 1. 4, 10–30; V. 1. 11, 5–13; V. 9. 5, 1–5 for the latter.

32 [Augustinus] *De Trinitate*, eds. William J. Mountain and François Glorie, CCSL 50/50A (Turnhout: Brepols, 1968).

33 *DT* IX. 1. 1.

34 *DT* IX. 2. 2.

35 *DT* IX. 2. 2–4. 4.

as they do beyond the substance itself; in the second case, they would not be able to become as they do equal to the whole; and in the third **[123]** case, they would not be able to maintain as they do their separate characters.[36] Thus, love and knowledge must be in the mind in some other manner that remains to be determined more precisely.

The task of determining the precise relation between mind, knowledge, and love is taken up in chapter 5 of *DT*, book IX, which begins by stating that there is "no confusion by blending" (*nulla commixtione confundi*) among the terms. Augustine next argues that all of these terms "are both [*a*] "singly in themselves" (*singula in se ipsis*) and [*b*] "wholly in all the others" (*tota in totis*), and that [*b* 1] "each single term is in the other two" (*singula in binis*) and [*b* 2] "each pair of terms is in the other one" (*bina in singulis*). The manner in which each of the terms is "in" itself or "in" another is dependent on a kind of relative attribution. For example, according to *a*., there is mind "said in relation to itself" (*ad seipsam dici*) where there is simply mind. However, according to *b*., there is mind "said in relation to its knowledge" (*ad suam notitiam relative dici*) where there is a "knowing" (*noscens*) mind. Similarly, according to *b*. 1, there is mind "in both its love and knowledge" (*in amore et notitia sua*) where there is mind that "knows and loves itself" (*se novit et amat*). However, according to *b*. 2, there is also mind, "together with its knowledge, in love" (*cum sua notitia in amore*) where the same mind "knows and loves itself" (*se novit et amat*). The chapter concludes by noting that each of the terms "is a substance" (*substantia est*), that all together constitute one substance or essence, and that each of the terms "is said relatively to the others" (*relative dici ad invicem*).[37]

Augustine does not associate the doctrine of mind, knowledge, and love that constitutes our third philosopheme with the teaching of any pagan Platonist, although he does elsewhere suggest that representatives of this philosophical tradition had partial illuminations regarding trinitarian doctrine. Undoubtedly some such assumption explains the striking parallel between Augustine's triad of mind, knowledge, and love within the human mind and the Greek Neoplatonists' triad of "being" (*on*), "life" (*zōē*), and "intellect" (*nous*) within the hypostasis of Intellect The latter doctrine is frequently employed as a structural principle from Iamblichus onwards, having been seemingly first proposed in Porphyry's interpretation of the *Chaldaean Oracles*.[38] Augustine agrees with the Greek Neoplatonists in treating the three **[124]** terms as simultaneously substances and relations in a manner transcending the normal usage of such terms, but disagrees with them in treating the three terms as having a consubstantiality of the type required by the Christian dogma of the Trinity.

36 *DT* IX. 4. 5–7.

37 *DT* IX. 5. 8.

38 For detailed discussion of this question, see Pierre Hadot, *Porphyre et Victorinus* (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1968), pp. 258–272.

4. Augustine: *De Vera Religione*[39]

In *De Vera Religione*, Augustine pursues a trinitarian analysis of created things in general in order to demonstrate, within the context of a detailed account of fall and redemption, the superiority of Christian over pagan doctrine. His analysis proceeds along unmistakably Neoplatonic lines although, since it is developed in the context of anti-pagan polemic, the influence of either Plato or any later Platonist over its formulation is not acknowledged.

Having addressed the dedicatee Romanianus near the beginning of the treatise, Augustine explains how every intellectual, rational, and corporeal thing derives from the highest Trinity its "being to the degree that it is" (*esse inquantum est*), its "possession of its form" (*speciem suam habere*), and its "being governed in the most ordered way" (*ordinatissime administrari*).[40] In order to preclude a typical misunderstanding, he immediately adds that the Trinity simultaneously produces the three aspects of structure – the Father did not simply confer the first, the Son simply the second, and the Holy Spirit simply the third – while the creature simultaneously receives those three elements of composition.[41] Augustine then expands his initial statement by saying that each created thing derives from the highest Trinity the facts that it "is some unitary thing" (*unum aliquid sit*), that it "is distinguished from other things by its proper form" (*specie propria discernatur a ceteris*), and that it "does not exceed the order of things" (*rerum ordinem non excedat*).

The trinitarian analysis is developed further by discerning three aspects of God himself correlative with the three aspects of created things. In one passage, Augustine argues that any corporeal thing has a certain "harmony" (*concordia*) with respect to its parts and a certain "peace" (*pax*) with respect to its form or species and that these aspects – the third and second in the original enumeration – are derived from a principle which is "uncreated form" (*forma* **[125]** *infabricata*) and is "most beautiful/formal" (*formosissima*, *speciosissimus*).[42] The relation between God and creation is further specified – adding the first aspect in the original enumeration – with the observation that the Creator is "one" (*unus*) and is the "first and highest being" (*prima atque summa essentia*) "in derivation from which" (*ex qua*) everything created "*is* to the degree that it is (exists)" (*est inquantum est*), and "*is good* to the degree that it is (exists)" (*inquantum est . . . bonum est*). Similar ideas are developed in two further passages. At one point, the three persons of the Trinity are discerned as "highest being" (*summe esse*), as "highest wisdom" (*summa sapientia*), and as "highest beneficence" (*summa benignitas*), respectively.[43] Augustine here focuses on the process of creating corporeal things by

39 [Augustinus] *De Vera Religione*, ed. Klaus D. Daur, CCSL 32 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1962).

40 *DVR* 7. 13.

41 By speaking of the "simultaneity" (*simul*), Augustine is here precluding not only the temporal separation of the three persons' actions but also any kind of separation of those actions.

42 *DVR* 11. 21–22. There is, of course, a word-play here: *forma→formosus, species→speciosus*.

43 *DVR* 18. 35–19. 37.

associating the first person with the transition of such things from "nothingness" (*nihil*) to "being" (*esse*), the second person with their transition from "un-formed" (*informis*) to "form" (*forma*), and the third person with the "goodness" (*bonum*) inherent in both transitions. Elsewhere, the first two persons of the Trinity are discerned as "being" (*esse*) and "life/wisdom" (*vita, sapientia*), respectively. The focus here is again on the process of creating corporeal things by associating the first person with the "unity" (*unum)* that all things seek and the second person with the "rule/form/paradigm" (*regula, forma, exemplum*) by which all things are made, the relation between the first two persons having been further specified as that of "being" (*esse*) to its "likeness" (*similitudo*).[44]

Augustine's explanation of the trinitarian structure of created things is another skilful adaptation of pagan Neoplatonic doctrine. Whereas Plotinus had understood the relation between providence and contingency in terms of the operation of a triad of Intellect, Soul, and Logos, Augustine's explains the history of fall and redemption in terms of the operation of a triad of Being, Form, and Order, the derivation of the third term from both the first and the second being common to the two accounts.[45] Of course, there are significant shifts between the pagan and Christian theories. For Plotinus, the three terms constitute a hierarchy of distinct principles on the basis of which physical reality may be understood by human beings, whereas for Augustine they represent three aspects of a unitary godhead discerned by human beings through their reflection on the status of corporeal things.

5. Macrobius: *Commentarius in Somnium Scipionis*[46]

[126] The fifth philosopheme is drawn from Macrobius' *Commentarius in Somnium Scipionis*. At various points in his discussion, this writer presents a complete metaphysical doctrine of Neoplatonic provenance and also cites Plotinus as a unique authority. The citation reads: "But Plotinus, the leader among teachers of philosophy alongside Plato, in his book *Concerning Virtues. . . .*"[47]

The metaphysical doctrine concerned is that of the three hypostases which Macrobius usually names "the Highest God" (*summus deus*), "Mind" (*mens, nous*), and "Soul" (*anima*), each of these principles producing the next in sequence and Mind additionally producing and containing the "Forms/Ideas" (*species, ideae*).[48] The writer is careful to distinguish this later Platonic doctrine from that of Cicero – for

44 *DVR* 31. 57–58 with continuation at *DVR* 33. 61–36. 67.

45 Plotinus' doctrine of Intellect, Soul, and Logos is stated in *Enneads* III. 2-III. 3 *On Providence*. The double derivation of the Logos is described at *Enn.* III. 2. 16, 1 ff.

46 *Macrobe, Commentaire au Songe de Scipion, Livre I*, ed. and tr. Mireille Armisen-Marchetti (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2001).

47 *CISS* I. 8. 5 *sed Plotinus inter philosophiae professores cum Platone princeps libro De virtutibus*.

48 *CISS* I. 2. 13–16; I. 6. 8–9; I. 6. 19–20, I. 14. 2–8, I. 14. 15. Cf. *CISS* I. 17. 12–15.

example, where Cicero's understanding of the "highest god" as the celestial sphere[49] or his application of the term *animus* to both Mind and Soul[50] is contrasted with the corresponding usages implied in the three-principle theory – although he obviously holds that the later variety of Platonism provides a useful commentary on the earlier. Especially characteristic of Macrobius is his approach to the doctrine of three principles through numerology. For example, the "monad" (*monas*) can be applied to each of the principles in turn – an interpretation that reveals the unity of the Highest God, and the co-presence of unity and multiplicity in both Mind and Soul, the multiplicity of the second and third principles being that of the Forms and of the animated universe respectively.[51] Moreover, the "number 5" (*quinarius numerus*) can be applied to the three principles when enumerated together with the celestial and terrestrial spheres.[52]

In one passage, Macrobius provides a detailed explanation of the doctrine of three hypostases in which both the structure of reality itself and the dynamic-logical principles underlying it are explained along Plotinian lines. According to this account, God produces Mind from himself with the "overflowing fertility of his power" (*superabundanti maiestatis fecunditate*). Mind, "as long as it contemplates its father" (*qua patrem inspicit*), preserves the complete likeness **[127]** of its cause, but "when it turns towards lower things" (*posteriora respiciens*), produces Soul. Soul "as long as it contemplates its father" (*patrem qua intuetur*) is filled from him, but "when its vision is gradually diverted" (*paulatim regrediente respectu*), produces bodies. The same passage further describes God as "unitary" (*unus*) and as the "first cause" (*prima causa*) and also characterizes Soul as having a double derivation. "From Mind" (*ex mente*) it derives the faculty of reasoning – which is its divine element – and "from its own nature" (*ex sua natura*), the faculties of sensation and growth.[53]

Elsewhere the doctrine of three hypostases is explained specifically from the viewpoint of our mode of expression. According to Macrobius, since the Highest God and Mind "transcend not only human language but also human thought" (*non sermonem tantum modo sed cogitationem quoque humanam superant*), any discourse regarding these things must resort to "analogies" (*similitudines*) and "models" (*exempla*).[54] When writing the present commentary, moreover, he is fairly consistent in applying this rule. In the same passage, he describes an analogical approach to the first principle – here called "the Good" (*tagathon*) in the manner of the Greeks. He reports that Plato held this principle to be "unknowable to man in its essential nature" (*sciri quale sit ab homine non posse*) and therefore

49 *CISS* I. 17. 12.
50 *CISS* I. 14. 2–8.
51 *CISS* I. 6. 8–9. This mode of interpretation is said to be justified because the monad is itself derived from the first principle.
52 *CISS* I. 6. 19–20.
53 *CISS* I. 14. 2–8.
54 *CISS* I. 2. 13–16.

referred to it by analogy with the sun. In a later passage, he fashions an analogical account of the interconnection of the three principles with one another. Here, the presence of a "single irradiation" (*unus fulgor*) is compared to the reflection of a single face in mirrors placed in a row and the presence of a "single bond" (*una connexio*) to the golden chain of Homer.[55]

It can be established beyond reasonable doubt that Macrobius is dependent upon Porphyry's edition and commentary on Plotinus on the basis of the Latin writer's explicit citation with title of *Enneads* I. 1: *On the Animate and the Man*, I. 2: *On the Virtues*, I. 9: *On Suicide*, II. 1: *On the Heaven*, II. 2: *On the Motion of the Heaven*, and II. 3 *On Whether the Heavenly Bodies are Causes*, and also on the basis of exact verbal parallels between *CISS* I. 14. 6–7 and *Enneads* V. 2: *On the Origin and Order of Beings after the First*, and III. 4: *On the Demon Assigned to Us*.[56] However, Macrobius' treatment of the doctrine of **[128]** the three hypostases in the last-mentioned passage of the *Commentarius* simplifies Plotinus' teaching. In particular, Macrobius depicts Mind as producing Soul by turning towards the lower rather than towards the higher,[57] thereby bringing the dynamic structure of Mind into parallel with that of Soul. Plotinus and other Greek Neoplatonists avoided such a doctrine presumably on the grounds that it would introduce the possibility of moral defect into the intellectual sphere.

6. Boethius: *De Consolatione Philosophiae*

In *DCP* IV, pr. 6 we encounter a philosopheme of a distinctly Neoplatonic type that is neither explicitly attributed to Plato or a later Platonist nor assimilated fully into the context of Christian thought. In this text, where Boethius begins his discussion of providence and fate, the philosopheme of interest is not the two terms themselves but the relation between them. We will consider this relation in a manner that might be defined as "objective" or "ontological."

According to Boethius in this important text, providence is the divine reason that "enfolds" (*complectitur*) all things. Moreover, the same "unfolding" (*explicatio*) of mutable things to the extent that it is "unified" (*adunata*) in the divine reason represents providence and to the extent that it is "unfolded" (*explicata*) in the mutable sphere is called fate.[58] In addition to their status as providence and fate, that which is enfolded and that which is unfolded are characterized in a number

55 *CISS* I. 14. 15.

56 For a detailed discussion of the evidence regarding a textual relation between Macrobius and Plotinus, see Stephen Gersh, *Middle Platonism and Neoplatonism. The Latin Tradition* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986), pp. 507–509, 518–520, and 543–546. A full discussion of the Platonic doctrine and sources of Macrobius can also be found in Maria Di Pasquale Barbanti, *Macrobio. Etica e psicologia nei "Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis"* (Catania: C.U.E.C.M., 1988). See especially pp. 60–84 on dream as myth and pp. 149–158 on the hypostasis of Soul.

57 See *CISS* I. 14. 6–7.

58 *DCP* IV, pr. 6, 34–40.

of ways. First, the enfolded is intelligence, mind, and reason.[59] In addition, the enfolded is unity whereas the unfolded is multiplicity.[60] Moreover, the enfolded is "eternity" (*aeternitas*) and whatever "is seen in presence" (*praesentarie prospici*), whereas the unfolded is "time" (*tempus*) and whatever exhibits "temporal order" (*temporalis ordo*).[61] Again, the enfolded is "all together" (*pariter*) whereas the unfolded is whatever pervades "spaces/places" (*loci, spatia*).[62] Finally, the enfolded is infinite.[63]

[129] In the same prose, the relation itself between the enfolded and the unfolded is described with considerable care. It is particularly important to note that, since "the same uniting as it is distributed" (*eadem vero adunatio digesta*) is fate,[64] the enfolded and the unfolded are not two completely different things. In the manner of Neoplatonic emanative causality, that which is unfolded "depends on" (*pendet*) that which is enfolded,[65] while everything that is "subject to" (*subesse, subiecta esse*) the unfolded is subject to the enfolded, although the reverse is not the case.[66] Boethius somewhat allusively characterizes the relation that we are discussing as that between the "remaining" (*manere*) of what is enfolded and the "proceeding" (*procedere, proficisci*) of what is unfolded[67] – this being the point at which the doctrine of causality stated in *DCP* IV, pr. 6 is identified precisely with the doctrine articulated in *DCP* III, m. 9. Also in accordance with a Neoplatonic model, that which is unfolded "is more entangled" (*maioribus nexibus implicari*) by subordinate causes than that which is enfolded,[68] the enfolded being relatively "liberated from fate" (*fato liberum*).[69] Using the analogy of a rotating astronomical sphere, the enfolded may finally be considered as relating to the unfolded as "a certain pivot around which they turn" (*cardo quidam circa quem versentur*).[70]

Although Boethius considers the relation between providence and fate that yields our philosopheme of enfolding and unfolding in a context lacking specific reference to either pagan Platonism or Christian thought, modern scholarship has drawn attention to similar ideas in Proclus whose doctrines were known to Boethius either directly or through the mediation of an Aristotelian commentator such as Ammonius. In fact, it seems most likely that Proclus' treatises *De Decem Dubitationibus circa Providentiam* and *De Providentia et Fato* provided Boethius

59 See *DCP* IV, pr. 6, 23, 26, 30, 37, etc.
60 See *DCP* IV, pr. 6, 24–25, 45–47.
61 See *DCP* IV, pr. 6, 44–45, 75–76.
62 See *DCP* IV, pr. 6, 34–36, 66–67.
63 This may be concluded from *DCP* IV, pr. 6, 34–35 where providence is said to enfold all things "albeit the infinite" (*quamvis infinita*).
64 *DCP* IV, pr. 6, 38–39.
65 *DCP* IV, pr. 6, 40–41.
66 *DCP* IV, pr. 6, 57–60.
67 See *DCP* IV, pr. 6, 42, 84–88.
68 *DCP* IV, pr. 6, 69–71.
69 *DCP* IV, pr. 6, 71–72.
70 *DCP* IV, pr. 6, 62–65.

with the core of his argumentation in the final proses of *DCP*. With respect to the philosopheme of enfolding and unfolding one may usefully compare Proclus' references to the enfolding of the un-embodied and embodied souls in one another that reflects their freedom or lack thereof,[71] and to the unfolding of the power pre-existing in providence by things subject to providence according to their differing capacities.[72]

7. Augustine: *De Musica* VI[73]

[130] A fundamental feature of most types of Platonism, and especially of Neoplatonism, is to understand reality as a form of transcendence. In late antiquity, philosophers in this tradition reveal a propensity to seek more extreme forms of transcendence and more intermediaries between the transcendence and the non-transcendent. Augustine provides many examples of these tendencies and nowhere more than in the sixth book of *De Musica*.

Our seventh philosopheme – which is not explicitly associated with either Plato or any later Platonist and seems like an original theory of Augustine – is the notion of seven levels of number. Since this doctrine is introduced as the culmination of a lengthy study of metrics, the "numbers" (*numeri*) involved here are of the nature of "times" (*tempora*),[74] although the temporal sphere is eventually transcended. The hierarchy of numbers is built up gradually in the course of the book and comprises:[75] *1*. "sounding" (*sonantes*) numbers or numbers in the sound of a verse that is recited,[76] *2*. "encountering" (*occursores*) numbers or those in the sense of someone who hears the verse, *3*. "progressive" (*progressores*) numbers or numbers in the action of someone who recites the verse, *4*. "recollective" (*recordabiles*) numbers or those in the memory of someone who recites the verse, *5*. "sensual" (*sensuales*) numbers or numbers that are evaluated according to sense,[77] *6*. "judicial" (*iudiciales*) numbers or those that are evaluated according to reason,[78] and *7*. "eternal" (*aeterni*) numbers or numbers that are given to the soul by God.[79]

71 Proclus, *DPF* 2. 4, 10–19 – Moerbeke's translation uses the term *complicatio* here.

72 Proclus *DDD* 3. 10, 30–41.

73 *Aurelius Augustinus, De musica liber VI*, ed. and tr. Martin Jacobsson (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2002).

74 *DM* VI. 2. 2.

75 See *DM* VI. 2. 2 for levels *1–4* of numbers; *DM* VI. 4. 5 and VI. 6. 16 for levels *1–5*: and *DM* VI. 9. 23–24 for levels *1–6*.

76 These numbers are initially called "sounding" but later renamed "corporeal" (*corporales*). Cf. *DM* VI. 2. 2 and *DM* VI. 9. 24.

77 These numbers are initially called "judicial" but later renamed "sensual" (*sensuales*). Cf. *DM* VI. 4. 5–6 and *DM* VI. 9. 24.

78 These numbers are initially called "judicial" but later renamed "rational" (*rationis*). Cf. *DM* VI. 9. 23 and *DM* VI. 11. 31.

79 *DM* VI. 12. 34–36.

However, the main concern of the present inquiry is not so much the types of number themselves but the types of transcendence that they imply. Augustine attempts to express this transcendence in a variety of ways, albeit without using a single technical term for "transcendence."

[131] In one set of passages, he establishes a distinction between a specific type of transcending and transcended term and then applies this distinction to number. For instance, when the transcending term is identified with "that which makes" (*faciens*) and the transcended term with "that which is made" (*factum*), it is possible to argue that the judicial numbers are superior to the recollective numbers: an idea provisionally accepted by Augustine,[80] although one could also conclude that sounding numbers are superior to encountering numbers: a notion that he immediately rejects.[81] Elsewhere, the transcending term is identified with that which is "not in local or temporal spaces" (*non in spatiis locorum et temporum*) and the transcended term with that "in bodily forms or temporal intervals" (*in corporum formis . . . aut in temporum intervallis*),[82] so that Augustine can discuss the questions whether sensual numbers are immortal and numbers inferior to these mortal,[83] and whether judicial numbers are immortal and the numbers inferior to these mortal,[84] and then conclude that only the eternal numbers are completely immutable.[85]

In other passages, Augustine applies *two* levels of transcending and transcended term to the seven levels of number, the transcending term being either God with respect to soul or soul with respect to body.[86] Thus, sounding numbers are associated with body and therefore placed below the encountering numbers (and by implication the numbers above the encountering) associated with soul,[87] the transcendence of the encountering numbers being established within an argument demonstrating the impassivity of soul with respect to body. Similarly, the eternal numbers are associated with God[88] and are therefore placed above the judicial numbers (and by implication the numbers below the judicial) associated with soul,[89] the transcendence of the eternal numbers **[132]** being established within an argument demonstrating their uniquely introspective character.

80 *DM* VI. 4. 6.

81 *DM* VI. 4. 7. The rejection of this position is achieved by the elaboration of an active theory of sensation in *DM* VI. 4. 7-VI. 5. 12.

82 *DM* VI. 12. 34. For the most part, transcendence of time is emphasized. However, transcendence of space and time is at issue in *DM* VI. 7. 19 and *DM* VI. 12. 34.

83 *DM* VI. 7. 17–8. 20.

84 *DM* VI. 9. 23.

85 *DM* VI. 12. 36.

86 For the hierarchy of God, Soul, Body, see *DM* VI. 4. 7, VI. 5. 13–6. 16; for that of Soul and Body, *DM* VI. 5. 8–12; for that of God and Soul, *DM* VI. 12. 36.

87 *DM* VI. 5. 8–12.

88 However, they are not identical with God but given by God. In perceiving them the soul operates through its highest part: the "mind" (*mens*). See *DM* VI. 12. 35–36.

89 *DM* VI. 11. 33–12. 36.

In a further set of passages, Augustine explains the transcendence of certain types of number over certain other types through an analysis of their relative dependence on one another. For example, the processes of sense-perception are examined in order to determine which of the four lowest types of number are dependent on which others, and it is concluded provisionally that sounding numbers "can exist without" (*sine . . . esse posse*) encountering numbers, progressive numbers without encountering numbers, and recollective numbers without progressive numbers.[90] Elsewhere, the degree of our dependence on the sounding, encountering, progressive, and recollective numbers is determined not by the static relations between levels of reality that are assumed in the earlier stages of Augustine's discussion but by the extent of our movement away from God in the direction of body when making ethical choices.[91]

8. Boethius: *De Consolatione Philosophiae*

Another important philosopheme of a distinctly Neoplatonic type that is neither attributed explicitly to Plato or a later Platonist nor assimilated fully into the context of Christian thought occurs in *DCP* V, pr. 4–6. In these texts, where Boethius continues his discussion of providence and fate, the philosopheme of interest is again not the two terms themselves but the relation between them. We will now consider this relation in a manner that might be termed "subjective" or "epistemological."[92]

In *DCP* V, pr. 4, Boethius makes two statements of an axiomatic nature. The first is that everything known is comprehended not "according to its own power" (*secundum sui vim*) but "rather according to the power of those faculties that know it" *secundum cognoscentium potius . . . facultatem*).[93] The second is that "the superior power of comprehending embraces the inferior" (*superior comprehendendi vis amplectitur inferiorem*), whereas "the inferior in no way attains the superior" (*inferior vero ad superiorem nullo modo consurgit*).[94] Given **[133]** that a standard hierarchy of faculties – in ascending order: "sense" (*sensus*), "imagination" (*imaginatio*), "reason" (*ratio*), and "intelligence" (*intellegentia*) – is assumed here and elsewhere,[95] Boethius can conclude from the two axioms that intelligence can, "formally beholding all things in the mind's single flash of intuition" (*illo uno ictu mentis formaliter . . . cuncta prospiciens*),[96] grasp the universal that is the proper object

90 *DM* VI. 2. 3–3. 4.

91 *DM* VI. 13. 37–42.

92 That Boethius sees the discussion to be summarized in the next paragraphs as the "subjective" counterpart of the "objective" discussion examined earlier is indicated by his comments at *DCP* IV, pr. 6, 74–78 where the duality of *ratio/intellectus* parallels that of *fatum/providentia*.

93 *DCP* V, pr. 4, 72–75. The same axiom is stated more briefly at *DCP* V, pr. 6, 1–3.

94 *DCP* V, pr. 4, 89–91.

95 Cf. *DCP* V, pr. 5, 12–20.

96 Or "in the manner in which it comprehends the Form that could not be known by any other" (*eo modo quo formam ipsam, quae nulli alii nota esse poterat, comprehendit*). Cf. *DCP* V, pr. 4, 86–88

of reason, the visible shape that is the proper object of imagination, and the immanent form that is the proper object of sense.[97] On the other hand, sense cannot grasp the immaterial shape, nor imagination the universal, nor reason the simple Form.[98]

The same argument is applied to the distinction between the "divine mind" (*divina intellegentia/mens*) and "human reason" (*humana ratio*) in *DCP* V, pr. 5.[99] Since the divine mind can grasp the objects proper to the human reason although the reverse is not the case, human reason cannot comprehend, for example, how future events could be observed in a manner different from that in which we observe them or how there might be a certain fore-knowledge of events that have no certain outcome.[100] However, a remedy for this situation can be sought. According to Boethius, it is perhaps possible to overcome the restrictions imposed by the normal hierarchy of faculties by rising to the "height of the supreme intelligence" (*summae intellegentiae cacumen*) where human reason may see what it cannot see "in itself" (*in se*).[101] The attempt to carry out this project with special reference to the problem of future contingents fills the final pages of *De Consolatione Philosophiae*.

Although Boethius considers the relation between providence and fate that yields our philosopheme of subjective determination in a context lacking specific reference to either pagan Platonism or Christian thought, modern scholarship has again drawn attention to parallels in Proclus' *opuscula* concerning **[134]** providence and fate. Arguments in *De Decem Dubitationibus circa Providentiam* to the effect that knowledge in the knower is characterized according to the latter's essential nature;[102] that this principle applies to different faculties such as intellect, reason, imagination, ad sense;[103] and that the One knows all things according to its own proper nature can all be cited as significant illustrations of the philosopheme of subjective determination.[104]

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It is perhaps time to draw some general conclusions about the eight philosophemes that have been juxtaposed in order to formulate what we have termed the doctrine of first principles in Latin Neoplatonism. One might reasonably ask whether the

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where the "eye of intelligence" (*intellegentiae oculus*) contemplates the simple Form "with the pure gaze of the mind" (*pura mentis acie*). Also cf. *DCP* V, pr. 5, 17–20.

97 *DCP* V, pr. 4, 94–100. Similar arguments with respect to reason and imagination follow at *DCP* V. pr. 4, 101–111.

98 *DCP* V, pr. 4, 91–93. Cf. *DCP* V, pr. 4, 5–7. For the epistemological consequences of this situation, see *DCP* V, pr. 5, 21–37.

99 *DCP* V, pr. 5, 38–39. At *DCP* V, pr. 5, 16–18, Boethius argues that intelligence is peculiar to God and reason peculiar to mankind. However, human reason does have some way of assimilating itself to the divine intelligence, as we shall see in the passages to be cited later.

100 *DCP* V, pr. 5, 38–54.

101 *DCP* V, pr. 5, 48–50. The same point is made more briefly at *DCP* V, pr. 6, 3–5.

102 Proclus, *DDD* 2. 7, 20–23.

103 *DDD* 1. 3, 6–17.

104 *DDD* 2. 7, 29–48.

implied conceptual unity of such a doctrine was apparent to the original writers and the earliest readers of such texts or is rather the product of a modern exegete's imagination. We will therefore conclude by looking briefly at what the *Rezeptionsgeschichte* of the eight philosophemes tells us about the systematic character of the doctrine of first principles in Latin Neoplatonism.

Historically speaking, the doctrine stated in text **1** from Boethius' *De Consolatione Philosophiae* stands apart from the other philosophemes. Study of an extensive medieval glossing tradition shows that the ninth verse of book III was understood as a definitive statement – perhaps *the* definitive statement – of Boethius' philosophy. However, as a consequence of certain ambiguities in the text itself, two opposite ways of reading *De Consolatione Philosophiae* came into circulation.[105] According to one interpretation – represented by Remigius of Auxerre – *DCP* III, verse 9 summarized a Christian doctrine of first principles also derivable from St. John's Gospel, the Pauline *Epistles*, and **[135]** Augustine's *Genesis* commentaries.[106] According to the alternative reading – formulated by Bovo of Corvey – it was the Platonic doctrine of first principles also stated in Virgil's *Aeneid* book VI and in Macrobius that was encapsulated in this verse.[107]

All the other philosophemes play important roles in establishing the tradition of Platonism – a substantial part of which is formed by *Neo*-Platonism – that is dominant between the ninth and twelfth centuries and revived in the period of transition into the Renaissance.

The work of Iohannes Scottus Eriugena during the ninth century exploits several of the Latin Neoplatonic doctrines that we have discussed. For example, philosopheme **2** from Augustine's *De Genesi ad Litteram*, book IV reappears in Eriugena's *Periphyseon*, book I where the angels' contemplation of the causes of all things in themselves is contrasted with their contemplation of them in God and in lower creatures, and is combined with Maximus the Confessor's doctrine of theophany.[108] Philosopheme **7** from Augustine's *De Musica*, book VI is exploited in Eriugena's *Periphyseon*, book III where the human soul's handling of the images initially formed in the sensory instruments is discussed in terms of eight

105 On this controversy, see most recently Susanna E. Fischer, "Boethius Christianus sive Platonicus. Frühe mittelalterliche Kommentare zu *O qui perpetua mundum ratione gubernas*," in *Boethius Christianus? Transformationen der* Consolatio Philosophiae *in Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, ed. R. F. Glei, N. Kaminski, F. Lebsanft (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), pp. 157–177. On the reception of Boethius' Platonism more generally during the Carolingian era, see also Adrian Papahagi, *Boethiana Mediaevalia: A Collection of Studies on the Early Medieval Fortune of Boethius' Consolation of Philosophy* (Bucharest: Zeta, 2010), pp. 37–72.

106 For a partial edition of this text, see H. F. Stewart, "A Commentary by Remigius Autissiodorensis on the *De Consolatione Philosophiae* of Boethius," *Journal of Theological Studies* 17 (1915–1916), pp. 22–42. See especially pp. 30–35.

107 For a partial edition of this text, see R. B. C. Huygens, "Mittelalterliche Kommentare zum 'O qui perpetua'," *Sacris Erudiri* 6 (1954), pp. 373–426. See especially pp. 383–384.

108 Eriugena, *Periphyseon* I, 446A–451C in Eriugena, *Periphyseon*, ed. E. Jeauneau, CCCM 161–165 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1996–2003).

distinct levels of number, and is combined with Gregory of Nyssa's theory of the relation between soul and body.[109]

Near the end of the eleventh century, the *Monologion* of Anselm of Canterbury attempts to demonstrate what is held by faith regarding the existence and the nature of God by using rational arguments. Trinitarian notions are introduced in a gradual manner and apparently without dependence on dogmatic assumptions in the course of this argumentation. Most prominent among these trinitarian notions is the ambivalently substantial and relational triad of mind, knowledge, and love derived from Augustine's *De Trinitate*, book IX that represented our philosopheme ***3***.[110] Anselm goes beyond Augustine **[136]** somewhat, in that his triad of mind, knowledge, and love is a formula applicable to the supreme principle itself as well as to that principle's image in the human soul.

In the early part of the twelfth century, the *Glosae super Macrobium* of William of Conches provide one of the most extensive elaborations of Latin Neoplatonic doctrine in general.[111] The hierarchy of the three hypostases of God, Mind, and Soul derived from Macrobius' *Commentarius in Somnium Scipionis* that represented our philosopheme ***5*** is mentioned frequently in these glosses, and the commentator is careful to explain the similarities and dissimilarities between the pagan triad and the Christian Trinity.[112] In dealing with Macrobius' application of the monad to the first principles, he notes that the manner in which Mind is born from God is for us to believe rather than to prove and that the identity between God and Mind allows us to refer the monad to both.[113] He also notes that Soul has been identified with the Holy Spirit by certain people and that its relation to the prior term intimates a procession *ab utroque*.[114]

The work of Thierry of Chartres during the twelfth century also exploits several of the Latin Neoplatonic doctrines that we have discussed. Thus, philosopheme ***6*** stated in Boethius' *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, book IV, prose 6 reappears in Thierry's *Lectiones in Boethii De Trinitate* where the distinction between the enfolding and unfolding of all things is applied both to the distinction between God and the projection of his Forms and to that between Matter and the derivation

109 Eriugena, *Periph*. III, 731B–732A, ed. cit. For a detailed discussion of this material, see Stephen Gersh, *Concord in Discourse. Harmonics and Semiotics in Late Classical and Early Medieval Platonism* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1996), pp. 97–103.

110 Anselm of Canterbury, *Monologion*, chs. 48. 63. 12–63, 74. 27 in *S. Anselmi Opera Omnia*, 1, ed. F. S. Schmitt (Seckau-Rome-Edinburgh: Nelson, 1938–1961, repr. Bad Canstatt, 1968). In actual fact, Anselm concentrates on the similar psychological trinity of memory, understanding, and love also drawn from Augustine.

111 On the influence of the Macrobian in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, see most recently Irene Caiazzo, *Lectures médiévales de Macrobe. Les Glosae Colonienses super Macrobium. Étude et édition* (Paris: Vrin, 2002), pp. 27–85.

112 For a partial edition of these glosses, see Helen R. Lemay, *The Doctrine of the Trinity in William of Conches' "Glosses on Macrobius"*, Diss. Columbia University, 1972.

113 1A, 3A, *ed. cit*.

114 3A, 6A, *ed. cit*.

of sensible things.[115] A more elaborate development of the same doctrine occurs in Nicholas of Cusa's *De Docta Ignorantia*.[116] Philosopheme ***8*** stated in *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, book V, proses 4–6 also **[137]** reappears in Thierry of Chartres' *Lectiones* where the comprehension of things known according to the faculty of the knower is employed as the basis for distinguishing between the cognitive objects of theology, mathematics, and physics.[117] Nicholas of Cusa's *Idiota de Mente* includes a more extensive development of the same doctrine.[118] Finally, the doctrine stated in text ***4*** from Augustine's *De Vera Religione*, although not repeated precisely in the Latin Church Father's terms, underpins the trinitarian cosmology of the entire Thierrian corpus.

These examples drawn from the philosophical tradition between the ninth and fifteenth centuries constitute a modest sampling of the uses to which the eight philosophemes have been put by medieval thinkers. However, the chosen examples are perhaps sufficient to show that the eight philosophemes established the architectural foundations of a continuous tradition of philosophical reflection in the Neoplatonic manner. Now, even in conceding the usefulness of the analyses of the individual philosophemes studied in this essay, it is possible to raise at least two objections to the method that we have pursued as a whole,[119] and we should perhaps conclude by considering the possible weight of such objections. The first likely objection would be that there is no single medieval thinker who can be shown explicitly to employ all eight philosophemes in the elaboration of his doctrine. The response to this objection would be that the "system" of Latin Neoplatonism whose existence has been posited by the present author takes the form of a family resemblance rather than that of a Platonic-Aristotelian universal. Therefore, the presence of certain philosophemes in one set of authors, other philosophemes in another set, and various philosophemes in both sets in no way diminishes the validity of the notion of a "system" of Latin Neoplatonism as a hermeneutic device. The second likely objection would be that the isolation of precisely these philosophemes depends on a retrospective reading of the late

115 Thierry of Chartres, *Lectiones in Boethii De Trinitate* 2. 10, 157. 8–158. 16 in *Commentaries on Boethius by Thierry of Chartres and his School*, ed. Nikolaus M. Häring (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1971).

116 See Nicholas of Cusa, *De Docta Ignorantia* II. 9, 91. 18–93. 3 in *Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia. Iussu et auctoritate Academiae Litterarum Heidelbergensis*, 1, ed. E. Hoffmann and R. Klibansky (Leipzig: Meiner, 1932).

117 Thierry of Chartres, *Lect*. 2. 30, 164. 58–2. 33, 166. 2, *ed. cit*.

118 See Nicholas of Cusa, *Idiota de Mente* 7, 100. 1–107. 14 in *Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia* 5, ed. L. Baur and R. Steiger (Hamburg: Meiner, 1983).

119 A third objection is perhaps less serious. This would be that the present essay has treated non-Christian and Christian authors as being on the same footing – a position which might be valid with respect to authors of the twelfth but hardly with respect to authors of the fifth century. In response to this question, one should point out that the Latin Neoplatonic "system" has been constructed from *philosoph*emes and not *theolog*emes, and that writers such as Augustine and Boethius knew perfectly well that they were arguing "philosophically" (*i.e.* dependent on philosophical sources) in the contexts described in this essay.

ancient milieu from the horizon of medieval philosophy. To this objection the response would be **[138]** that the Latin Neoplatonic "system" whose significance has been emphasized in the present essay was intended to be seen from the start as a dynamic historical trajectory rather than a static conceptual paradigm. Therefore, the dependence of the eight philosophemes on the active process in which readers respond to writers, and in that very fact become writers in their turn, likewise fails to limit the validity of the notion of a system of Latin Neoplatonism as a hermeneutic device. Indeed, one could argue on both these counts that the late ancient and medieval authors themselves, irrespective of the different theoretical positions that might have followed from their understanding of themselves as Christian thinkers informed by the Platonic tradition, *in practice* handled their own sources somewhat along the lines argued by this essay.[120]

120 I am grateful to various colleagues (and especially to Claudio Moreschini and Lodi Nauta) who raised questions of the kind discussed in our final paragraph in response to both an oral and a written presentation of this text.

4

NON-DISCURSIVE THINKING IN MEDIEVAL PLATONISM

[125] That a philosophical method based excessively upon formal logic was held by certain thinkers to be inadequate for dealing with the most profound questions is a fact which should be more readily admitted by historians of philosophy. The "Neo-Platonists" of antiquity and the *Platonici* of the Middle Ages must be placed in the forefront of thinkers who were sensitive to such limitations and endeavored to pursue alternative methods. By the end of antiquity, these philosophers had seemingly established a clear distinction between the sphere of discursive thinking or *dianoia* and that of non-discursive thinking or *noēsis*. Within the former sphere, Aristotelian rules or restricted Platonic rules were held to be applicable, whereas in the latter it was procedures of a more typically "Platonic" character which held sway.

In this essay, we would like to examine some accounts of the nature of non-discursive thinking and of the relation between non-discursive and discursive thinking by "Platonic" philosophers during the patristic and medieval periods.[1] Study of these accounts will involve us in certain problems of terminology, since Latin sources sometimes associate non-discursive and discursive thinking with "intellect" (*intellectus*) and "reason" (*ratio*), respectively, but sometimes identify the two modes of thinking with a "higher" (*superior*) and a "lower" (*inferior*) type of reason respectively. Nevertheless, the concept lying behind the variation of terminology is relatively stable. If we allow the term "rational" to retain its commonly accepted modern meaning, the non-discursive thinking **[126]** described in these patristic and medieval Platonic texts can be considered "supra-rational", while the discursive thinking described in those texts might be viewed as "rational". It should be noted that the concept of "supra-rational" intended here always maintains some continuity with respect to the concept of "rational" and should not

1 An emphasis on *thinking* is intended here. In this essay, we will be concerned with the questions *1* whether non-discursive thinking exists and what the nature of non-discursive thinking is and *2* how non-discursive thinking can be thought discursively – the first question being connected with the notion of a distinction between the non-discursive and discursive spheres and the second with that of a continuity between the two spheres. We will reserve for discussion elsewhere a question *3* how non-discursive thinking can be *expressed in language* (oral or written).

be seen as necessarily dependent on the psychological notions of faith or affectivity, although it does not exclude the latter as concomitants.[2]

A reading of their texts will suggest that the *intention* of the "Platonic" philosophers was to conceptualize the distinction between non-discursive thinking and discursive thinking according to very strict criteria. However, given that conceptualization itself seems to be totally dependent upon discursiveness, such philosophers can in the final analysis only conceptualize the non-discursive in a discursive manner. Therefore, a reading of their texts will indicate that the *result* achieved by the Platonists is to weaken the very criteria by which non-discursive thinking and discursive thinking are distinguished from one another. Some of the most important representatives of the Platonic tradition may have been sufficiently conscious of the direction in which their thought was being drawn to have turned the situation to a certain philosophical advantage.

In order to understand the nature of non-discursive thinking and the relation between non-discursive and discursive thinking in patristic or medieval philosophy, something needs to be said about the historical origins and the conceptual structure of this problematic in ancient thought. Regarding the historical origins of the problematic in ancient philosophy, the role of Plotinus as creator and transmitter is central. It was he who most clearly established the importance of non-discursive thinking, locating it within the second of the three primal hypostases of the One or Good, Intellect or Being, and Soul.[3] With respect to the Platonic tradition, Intellect-Being subsumes the functions of the "intelligible living creature" of the *Timaeus*, of the "greatest kinds" of the *Sophist*, and of the "one-being" of the *Parmenides*. With respect to the Aristotelian tradition, Intellect-Being mirrors the functions of the "unmoved mover" of the *Metaphysics*. The second hypostasis' non-discursive-thinking should be contrasted with the non-thinking of the first hypostasis and the discursive thinking of the third, although in Plotinus' system the third hypostasis also can achieve non-discursive thinking by becoming consciously identified with the second.[4] Regarding the conceptual structure of our problematic in ancient philosophy, certain aspects of Plotinus' doctrine should be placed in relief. These are first, **[127]** what might be termed the *logical* criteria by which non-discursive is distinguished from discursive thinking: namely, suspension of the law of contradiction, and non-propositional form. Secondly, they are what might be termed the *noetic-ontological* criteria by which non-discursive is distinguished from discursive thinking: namely, timeless dialectic, and absence of the inferential process. Since a clear distinction between propositions as logical

2 Nicholas of Cusa, *De Visione Dei* 9, 36, 1–2, ed. A. D. Riemann (Hamburg: Meiner, 2000) employs this sense of supra-rational when he describes the coincidence of opposites as "above the entire capacity of reason" (*super omnem capacitatem rationis*).

3 Subsequent Platonists like Porphyry, Iamblichus, and Proclus also assume the existence of a metaphysical principle (or class of metaphysical principles) capable of non-discursive thinking. However, see the next note.

4 On Proclus' different view of this matter, see our discussion on pp. 141–144 later.

and as psychological entities was generally not maintained by our sources, the two sets of criteria should not be understood as applying in total independence of one another.

We will venture merely a few remarks on each of these points.

1 The first *logical* criterion of non-discursive thinking was suspension of the law of contradiction.[5] For Plotinus, the thinking of Intellect is conditioned by the identities of subject and object and of unity and plurality which define this hypostasis. Therefore, any differentiation between the thinker and the thought and between the thoughts themselves is "together" (*athroos*) or "all together" (*homou pas*),[6] these phrases implying that the logical subject constituted by Intellect cannot expand either spatially or temporally to take contradictory predicates. Plotinus' references to the relations between whole and part or between universal and particular in Intellect – e. g. among its various constituent intellects[7] – and his references to the presence of opposites in Intellect – e. g. its categories of Same and Other or of Rest and Motion[8] – must be understood in this way. It should be noted that Plotinus tends to operate the suspension of the law of contradiction informally rather than to advocate its suspension formally.[9]

2 The second logical criterion of non-discursive thinking was non-propositional form.[10] Plotinus provides an abstract statement of this theory

5 See Aristotle, *Metaphysics* G 3, 1005b 5–34, ed. W. D. Ross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1924). This principle states that the same attribute cannot at the same time belong and not belong to the same subject and in the same respect. The principle cannot itself be demonstrated because it is presupposed in all demonstrations, although its validity can be proved indirectly by showing how attempts to suspend it lead to absurdities. On the law of contradiction with respect to Neoplatonism, see C. Steel, "Beyond the Principle of Contradiction? Proclus' Parmenides and the Origin of Negative Theology," in *Die Logik des Transzendentalen. Festschrift für Jan A. Aertsen zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. M. Pickavé (Berlin-New York: De Gruyter, 2003), pp. 581–599. However, it will be necessary for us to disagree with this important article. See p. 147.

6 For *athroos* see Plotinus, *Enn.* III. 7. 11. 22, ed. P. Henry-H.-R. Schwyzer (Paris-Bruxelles-Leiden: Desclée de Brouwer-Brill, 1951–1973). For *homou pasa*, see *ibid*., III. 7. 3. 37 and III. 7. 11. 3.

7 See *ibid*., VI. 2. 20. 1–29. Cf. *ibid*., V. 8. 4. 1–11.

8 See *ibid*., VI. 7. 13. 1–57. Cf. *ibid*., V. 9. 10. 10–14.

9 Plotinus comes closest to denying the applicability of the law of contradiction at *Enn.* V. 5. 2. 18–24. With respect to Intellect, "real truth is agreement not with anything else but only with itself . . . any act of refutation is borne into identity with what was stated earlier" (*hē ontōs alētheia ou sumphōnousa allōi all'heautēi . . . eis gar tauton ho pheromenos elenchos tōi proeiponti . . . pheretai*).

10 In practice, application of this criterion seems to imply application of the previous one. Two clarifications are necessary about the use of the term "propositional" in the present essay. *1.* By "non-propositional" is meant a logical item which falls outside the two standard definitions of a proposition in ancient philosophy: *a.* A composite entity considered not as a unit in itself but as put together out of a subject, predicate, and copula (vaguely stated by Aristotle, *De Interpretatione* 17a 20–26, ed. L. Minio-Paluello (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1949); *b.* An expression signifying what is true or what is false (clearly stated by Boethius, *De Topicis Differentiis* 1174B, *PL* 64). *2.* To the extent that we will be attempting to understand the status of something "non-propositional"

when he insists **[128]** that there are no "predicates" (*lekta*), no "propositions" (*protaseis*), no "axioms" (*axiōmata*), and no "theorems" (*theōrēmata*) subsisting within Intellect.[11] His main argument seems to be that the association of such things with Intellect would tend to impute a verbal rather than a real and an external rather than an internal character to the latter. Plotinus also provides a concrete illustration of this theory by observing that the multiplicity expressed by the phrases "I am this" (*eimi tode*), "I am I am" (*eimi eimi*), "I I" (*ego ego*), and "I and this" (*ego kai tode*)[12] is characteristic of Intellect but not of the One. It is significant that the multiplicity attributed to the Intellect in this passage is expressed not only by a predicative statement but also by three utterances of a manifestly non-propositional character.[13]

3 The first *noetic-ontological* criterion of non-discursive thinking was timeless dialectic. For Plotinus, the thinking of Intellect is simultaneously Motion and Rest in the Platonic sense,[14] and simultaneously pure activity and a movement from **[129]** potentiality to actuality in the Aristotelian sense.[15] In comparison with Soul, which itself constitutes Time (*chronos*) as the temporal projection from past, through present, to future, Intellect exists together with Eternity

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rather than of something "propositional", it will not be necessary to take up definite positions with regard to questions concerning the ontological status of propositions: i. e. whether they are mental entities, extra-mental entities, entities *sui generis*, etc. On the ancient doctrine of propositions and its influence, see N. Kretzmann, "Medieval Logicians and the Meaning of Propositio," *The Journal of Philosophy* 67 (1971), pp. 767–787.

11 Plotinus, *Enn.* I. 3. 5. 17–19: "[Dialectic] has no knowledge of propositions – which are verbal matters – but it knows the truth and thereby knows what are called 'propositions'" (*peri protaseōs oun ouk oide – kai gar grammata – eiduia de to alēthes oiden ho kalousi protasin*), V. 5. 1. 38–40: "[the objects of Intellect] are not premisses, axioms, or predicates – as such, they would be statements about other things, and would not be beings in themselves" (*ou gar dē protaseis oude axiōmata oude lekta. ēdē gar an kai auta peri heterōn legoi, kai ouk auta ta onta eiē*), V. 8. 4. 48–49: "[the higher knowledge does not consist of] theorems and the accumulation of propositions" (*theōrēmata kai sumphorēsis . . . protaseōn*), V. 8. 5. 5–6: "[the wisdom of nature] is no longer put together from theorems" (*ouketi suntetheisa ek theōrēmatōn*).

12 *Ibid*., V. 3. 10. 34–39. It is grammatically possible that the second and third phrases are actually elliptical expressions of the *propositions* "I am (what) I am" and "I (am) I". However, the elliptical expression seems designed to reduce the propositional character of the phrases.

13 These remarks should be compared with various statements regarding the One. At *Enn.* V. 5. 13. 11–13, Plotinus says that we should remove all predicative statements from the One and make only the existential statement. At *Enn.* VI. 7. 38. 1–25, he argues that neither predicative statements nor the existential statement should be made about the Good. At *Enn.* III. 8. 11. 12–13, he says that once one has uttered the word "good" of the First, one should add no further thought to it.

14 See *ibid*., V. 1. 4. 35–37 where Motion provides for the intellectual activity and Rest for the stability of the intelligible object. There is a fuller discussion at VI. 2. 7. 1 ff.

15 See *ibid*., II. 5. 3. 31–40, V. 9. 4. 6–12, V. 9. 10. 10–15 for a statement of the former and *ibid*., III. 8. 11. 1–2 for a statement of the latter. The combination of these two ideas involves the suspension of the law of contradiction mentioned earlier.

(*aiōn*) only in the present.[16] In comparison with the One which transcends such processes, Intellect is constituted by a pluralizing and unifying cycle of coming forth and turning towards its prior in which the kinds of Being, Sameness, Otherness, Rest, and Motion can be seen[17] and which produces the world of Forms.[18] The peculiar dynamism of Intellect is also characterized as its "striving" (*ephesis*) towards the higher.[19]

The second *noetic-ontological* criterion of non-discursive thinking was absence of the inferential process.[20] Plotinus provides a general statement of this theory when he argues that Intellect does not employ the processes of "reasoning" (*logismos*), "demonstration" (*apodeixis*), and "syllogism" (*sullogismos*).[21] A striking comparison between hieroglyphic and alphabetic writing on the one hand and non-inferential and inferential thinking on the other provides a concrete illustration of this theory. Thus, the Egyptian priests engraved images in their temples, each image being a "concentrated substratum of thought" (*hupokeimenon kai athroon*), in order to manifest the non-discursiveness of the intellectual sphere. Only subsequent to this concentrated substratum came the likeness unfolded into externality which expressed the concentrated element "in a discursive manner and giving the reasons why things **[130]** were such and such" (*en diexodōi kai tas aitias, di'has houtō, exeuriskon*).[22]

Before turning to the transformation of these doctrines by Latin writers of late antiquity and their subsequent transmission to medieval thinkers, some further preliminary remarks are necessary. In particular, we should note that the four criteria of non-discursive thinking elaborated above will provide a clear conceptual

16 For Intellect and *aiōn*, see *ibid*., III. 7. 3; for Soul and *chronos*, see *ibid*., III. 7. 11 and III. 7. 13.

17 See *ibid*., V. 1. 4. 33–41, VI. 2. 7. 1–8. 49.

18 See *ibid*., II. 4. 5. 28–35, V. 3. 11. 1–30, V. 4. 2. 3–7, VI. 7. 35. 19–33.

19 See *ibid*., III. 8. 11. 23–26, V. 3. 11, 11–12, V. 6. 5. 8–10.

20 In practice, application of this criterion seems to imply application of the previous one.

21 Plotinus, *Enn.* I. 3. 5. 21–23: "[Dialectic] directly intuits what is presented to it in the manner of sensation, leaving evaluation of arguments for the satisfaction of another discipline" (*prospheromenōn hōsper kai hē aisthēsis epiballousa, akribologeisthai de heterai didōsi touto agapōsēi*), V. 3. 9. 21–22: "[Intellect] knows itself without forming syllogisms about itself, for it is always present to itself" (*autos hauton ou sullogizomenos peri hautou. paresti gar aei hautōi*), V. 5. 1. 3–6: "[Intellect] must always know and never forget . . . nor does it operate through demonstration" (*dei ara auton aei eidenai kai mēd'an epilathesthai pote . . . ou toinun di'apodeixeōs*), V. 5. 2. 10–18: "Truth is in [Intellect] . . . and thus it has no need of demonstration . . . it knows an antecedent as its own derivation, and the antecedent's consequent as its own identity" (*hē alētheia en autōi . . . houtōs oud'apodeixis dei . . . kai ei ti pro autou, hoti ex autou, kai ei ti met'ekeino, hoti autos*), V. 8. 4, 35–37: "[the wisdom of Intellect] is not built up out of reasonings, and does not lack anything which might require it to investigate" (*ou poristheisa logismois . . . kai elleipousa oudeni hina zētēseōs deēthēi*), VI. 2. 21. 32–33: "Whatever one finds existing in nature through reasoning, one will find this existing in Intellect without reasoning" (*hosa an tis ek logismou laboi en tēi phusei onta, tauta heurēsei en nōi aneu logismou onta*).

22 *Ibid*., V. 8. 6. 1–19.

framework for the interpretation of the later material but will also represent a historical abstraction and a doctrinal simplification. From the historical viewpoint, it is necessary to understand the transmission of Plotinus' notion of non-discursive thinking in a broader context. Although Plotinus was the original and definitive formulator of "Platonic" philosophy in late antiquity whose doctrine was transmitted to the Middle Ages in something like its original form by Latin writers like Augustine and Macrobius, his doctrine was also transmitted to medieval thinkers in a form modified by combination with the doctrine of Proclus by Greek writers like (pseudo-) Dionysius and Latin writers like Boethius. Given that most of the Greek and Latin writers who transmitted "Platonic" philosophy to the Middle Ages had also assimilated Christianity to varying degrees, these transmitted doctrines of Plotinus and Proclus were further modified in accordance with ecclesiastical dogma established in eastern and western Europe by the relevant dates. From the doctrinal viewpoint, it is necessary to understand certain variations of Plotinus' notion of non-discursive thinking that became prevalent. Of particular importance is the combination of the problematic of non-discursiveness with the problematic of transcendence and immanence as indicated by negation and affirmation.[23] Whereas Plotinus understood each of the principles of the One or Good, the Intellect or Being, and the Soul as both transcendent and immanent with respect to subsequent realities, and assigned non-discursive thinking primarily to the principle of Intellect or Being, the transmitters of Plotinus' thought would – among other significant modifications – identify the One or Good with the Intellect or Being and then understand the relation between the transcendence and immanence of the combined principle as a non-discursive relation. We shall find this combination of the problematic of non-discursiveness with the problematic of transcendence and immanence as indicated by negation and affirmation to be a subtext of several of the discussions to be considered in this essay.

Suspension of the law of contradiction

[131] The first element in the conceptual structure of our problematic – i. e. that of the nature of non-discursive thinking and of the relation between non-discursive and discursive thinking -, within the *logical* category, was suspension of the law of contradiction. The most important example of this in the period of transition between ancient and medieval philosophy occurs in connection with the doctrine of divine naming.

In *On the Trinity*, Augustine applies the Aristotelian categories to God in two ways. First, the application of certain categories is associated with both affirmation and negation, so that God is said to be good without quality, great without

23 See our discussions below of divine names (pp. 131–134), of *coincidentia oppositorum* (pp. 133–134), and of modalities (pp. 140, 145). On the relation between transcendence and immanence and negation and affirmation, see S. Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena. An Investigation of the Prehistory and Evolution of the Pseudo-Dionysian Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 1978), pp. 153–167.

quantity, and so forth.[24] Second, the application of certain categories other than substance is identified with the application of the category of substance, so that God is said either to be great or good "substantially" (*substantialiter*)[25] or else to be both great and greatness and both good and goodness.[26] Since the combination of these two approaches implies that contradictory terms are competing for the same predicative position with respect to an undivided logical subject, a suspension of the law of contradiction has clearly taken place. Boethius repeats much of this discussion in his *On the Trinity*, using a more formalized terminology which makes the thought process a little clearer. For example, when applied to God, "just" is a quality which is not accidental but a substance and beyond substance and "great" a quantity which is similar to the super-substantial. Moreover, when applied to God, "just" indicates a quality "by which something is (exists)" (*qua est aliquid*) and great a quantity "by which something is (exists)".[27]

Augustine's and Boethius' identification of the Aristotelian categories with divine names should be compared with Calcidius' and pseudo-Dionysius' interpretation of the Platonic Forms in the same manner.[28] Calcidius introduces this theory in one passage of his *Commentary on the Timaeus* where the status of paradigms or Forms of the four elements within the divine mind is at issue. According to the commentator, Plato had deferred the question whether there is one archetypal Form of all existent things or else innumerable such archetypes of the innumerable things or whether the world of Forms is "a simultaneous identity of one and many" (*idem unum pariter et multa*) as he teaches in the *Parmenides*. He deferred this question **[132]** because it was more appropriate to a lofty theological discussion than to the natural scientific investigation under way in the *Timaeus*.[29] Pseudo-Dionysius uses the same theory as the basis of an extended discussion of the divine attributes which are equivalent to divine paradigms in his *On Divine Names*. He argues on the one hand that terms indicating perfections when applied to God are ranked in order of generality. Thus, Being must be placed before (*praemittitur*) God's other participated terms, for Being through itself is higher than Life through itself, Wisdom through itself, and Similarity through itself.[30] On the other hand, he also states explicitly that such terms when applied to God can have no such ranking. Here, he recalls his own earlier proof that all the names appropriate to God are

24 Augustine, *De Trinitate* V. 1. 2, ed. W. J. Mountain and F. Glorie (Turnhout: Brepols, 1968). On the dialectic of negation and affirmation implied here see p. 130 and n. 23.

25 Augustine, *De Trin.* V. 8. 9.

26 *Ibid*., V. 10. 11.

27 Boethius, *De Sancta Trinitate* 4, 187–215 and 4, 254–259, ed. C. Moreschini (Műnchen-Leipzig: Teubner, 2005).

28 Explicit combination of these two approaches can be found in earlier Platonic thinkers such as Plotinus. See *Enn.* VI. 2. 21. 6-VI. 2. 22. 3.

29 Calcidius, *Commentarius in Timaeum* 272, 276. 10–277. 8, ed. J. H. Waszink (London-Leiden: Brill, 1962).

30 Ps.-Dionysius [translated by Eriugena], *De Divinis Nominibus* 5, p. 337, col. 1, ed. P. Chevallier (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1937–1950), *Dionysiaca* [=820AB].

always applied by Scripture "not to parts but to the whole Divinity" (*non partim sed in tota . . . divinitate*).[31] Since the combination of these two positions implies that contradictory terms are competing for the same predicative position with respect to an undivided subject, the logical implications of pseudo-Dionysius' argument are similar to those of Augustine's discussion.

Within the medieval period, several philosophers draw out the implications of these texts. Eriugena extends the Dionysian approach by integrating it into his theories of the four forms of Nature and of the primordial causes. The four forms of Nature (or God) – which represent a real and conceptual distinction superimposed on the divine attributes – are the Creating and Not Created, the Creating and Created, the Not Creating and Created, and the Not Creating and Not Created. According to Eriugena, these forms are not divided according to whole and parts or according to genus and species but "in a certain intelligible contemplation of the universe" (*intelligibili quadam universitatis contemplatione*).[32] Moreover, our intelligence discerns an opposition among these forms – for example, between God as creating and not created (as beginning) and God as not creating and not created (as end) – although there is no opposition in God himself.[33] The primordial causes – which represent a real and conceptual distinction coterminous with the divine attributes – include Goodness, Being, Life, Reason, Intelligence, Wisdom, Power, and Truth. According to Eriugena, the primary division of Nature into the creating and the created is reflected "infinitely and uniformly" (*uniformiter . . . in infinitum*) in the division of all the universals into self-subsistent and participated terms. The former as primordial causes are not "separated from one another" (*a se invicem segregatae*) and "are defined by an order known to none" **[133]** (*nullique cognito ordine diffinitae*), although an order accrues to them "in their effects" (*in effectibus suis*) and "in the contemplation" (*in theoria*) of the mind perceiving them.[34]

Other medieval thinkers elaborate the same problematic by starting from different sources. Anselm of Canterbury develops the Augustinian-Boethian theory in two directions in his *Monologion*. In a certain sense, he strengthens the connection with Platonism by associating the substantial application of categorical terms like "just" and "great" with an application of each term "through itself" (*per seipsum*),[35] the latter terminology recalling both the Aristotelian discussion of substance and the Platonic theory of Forms In another sense, he weakens the connection with Platonism by embedding the notions of "through itself" and "through

31 *Ibid*., 2, p. 58, col. 4 Chevallier [=636C]. On the dialectic of negation and affirmation implied here, see p. 130 and n. 23.

32 Eriugena, *Periphyseon* II. 1–5, ed. É. Jeauneau (Turnhout: Brepols, 1996–2003).

33 *Ibid*., "Versiones I-II" 70–82 and 237–266, ed. Jeauneau.

34 *Ibid*., III. 211–219. On the dialectic of negation and affirmation implied here see p. 130 and n. 23.

35 Anselm, *Monologion* 1, 13. 1–3, 16. 28, ed. F. S. Schmitt (Edinburgh: Nelson, 1938). Cf. *Monol.* 17, 31. 9–32. 4.

another" (*per aliud*) into an Aristotelian-Boethian syllogistic sequence of arguments.[36] Thierry of Chartres exploits the Calcidius passage in the same way that Eriugena had exploited the Dionysian material: namely, in order to explain how the divine attributes are both separated or ordered and un-separated or un-ordered from different viewpoints. In one passage, he argues that there is only one Form in God, whereas the plurality of Forms arises "from the conjunction of both" (*ex coniunctione utriusque*) God and Matter,[37] and in another passage, that the Forms emanating from God are a unified plurality, whereas the full plurality arises from the conjunction of the Forms "in the divine mind" (*in mente divina*) – which are also called the "Ideas" (*ydeae*) – with Matter.[38] Nicholas of Cusa synthesizes all the preceding elements within the context of a "coincidence of opposites". When introducing his discussion of mathematical symbolism in *On Learned Ignorance*, he radicalizes the Augustinian-Boethian approach by speaking of a situation "where accident is substance" (*ubi accidens sit substantia*).[39] Later in the same work, he uses Calcidius' description of the unity and multiplicity of exemplars in God as the starting point for an extensive discussion of participation.[40] When discussing the divine attributes in *On the Vision of God*, Cusanus radicalizes the pseudo-Dionysian approach by speaking of a circular theology in which "one attribute is affirmed of another" (*unum attributorum affirmatur de alio*).[41]

[134] Another example of the suspension of the law of contradiction in the period of transition between ancient and medieval philosophy can be found in the field of Trinitarian psychology.

Augustine's search for God through his image in the soul begins with a reflection on the nature of love. As he explains in *On the Trinity*, our soul by loving another soul must love Love itself – since the relation between our soul and Love is one of participation in a transcendent term – and also our soul by loving Love itself must love another soul – since this transcendent term implies the notion of correlativity.[42] The structure with respect to "love" (*amor*) is duplicated in the structure with respect to "knowledge" (*notitia*), given that the relation of both these terms to "Mind" (*mens*) is to be understood in the context of a Trinitarian

36 *Ibid*., 1, 13. 1–7, 22. 10.

37 Thierry of Chartres, *Commentum in De Trinitate* 2. 44, 82. 25–33, ed. N. M. Häring, *Commentaries on Boethius by Thierry of Chartres and his School* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1971). Cf. Id., *Lectiones in De Trinitate* 2. 42, 168. 68–75 ed. N. M. Häring.

38 Id., *Lectiones in De Trin*. 2. 65, 176. 40–2. 66, 176. 50. Thierry's discussion takes from Calcidius the explicit attribution of this doctrine to Plato's *Parmenides*.

39 Nicholas of Cusa, *De Docta Ignorantia* I. 10, 20. 9–10, ed. E. Hoffmann-R. Klibansky (Leipzig: Meiner, 1932).

40 *Ibid*., I. 17, 33. 1-I. 18, 37. 10.

41 Id., *De Visione Dei* 3. 8, 11–13. Nicholas exemplifies the principle by saying that God's sameness is his otherness and his motion is his rest. At *De Vis. Dei* 9. 37, 7–13 the "Wall of Paradise" becomes the symbol of this circular theology.

42 Augustine, *De Trinitate* VIII. 7. 10–10. 14.

analogy.[43] Therefore, Augustine can specify the logical relation between the terms by saying that love and knowledge are not in the mind as qualities or quantities are "in a subject" (*in subiecto*) – for the latter do not extend beyond the subject as is clearly the case here – and that love and knowledge are also not in the mind as parts constituting its whole.[44] With respect to the Trinitarian relation of mind, love, and knowledge, each term is in each other term, as a whole within the whole, and both singly and doubly, so that mind is in love and knowledge, love in mind and knowledge, and knowledge in mind and love.[45]

Within the medieval period, Anselm of Canterbury's *Monologion* contains perhaps the most celebrated further development of this argument. This begins by following its source closely in seeing the trinity of mind, knowledge, and love in man as an image of the relation between persons in the divine Trinity.[46] It moves in a more original direction by applying the structure of mind, knowledge, and love – or of its equally Augustinian analogue "memory" (*memoria*), "understanding" (*intelligentia*), and "love" (*amor*) – directly to the description of the godhead.[47] However, the logical relations are the same as those implied in the earlier text. Anselm shows this by explaining on the one hand, that each term is present as a whole in each of the other terms[48] and on the other, that the term corresponding to the Father is not equivalent to the other terms in such a way that it represents something begotten or proceeding.[49]

Non-propositional form

[135] The second element in the conceptual structure of our problematic, within the *logical* category, was non-propositional form. The most important example of this in the period of transition between ancient and medieval philosophy occurs in connection with the doctrine of Truth.

Augustine introduces the notion of divine Truth into the context in which he discusses the notions of divine Goodness and Greatness. Here, he argues that we must understand that God is Truth in the same manner in which we understand that he is Goodness or Greatness – i. e. by substantial equivalence – and that we must understand that God's Truth is equivalent to God's Greatness.[50] He then draws a startling conclusion from this line of argument. With respect to God, we should avoid asking the question "What is Truth?" and answering with the statement "God is Truth" – i. e. formulating propositions – since the resort to these

43 *Ibid*., IX. 4. 4.
44 *Ibid*., IX. 4. 5–7.
45 *Ibid*., IX. 5. 8.
46 Anselm, *Monologion* 32, 51. 7–18.
47 *Ibid*., 49, 64. 14–24.
48 *Ibid*., 59, 70. 1–17. Cf. *Ibid*., 51, 65. 11–52, 65. 24.
49 *Ibid*., 61, 71. 16–72. 3.
50 Clearly Augustine is returning to the argument discussed earlier in connection with the suspension of the law of contradiction.

expressions brings in obstructing images to our mind. It is better to remain in that first "flash" (*ictus*) that came upon us when we said "Truth"[51] – presumably a non-propositional utterance. We know that Augustine had himself attempted to apply this precept in the aftermath of his dramatic encounter with the "Books of the Platonists." The *Confessions* report that when he was attempting to grasp the invisibles of God from the constitution of the world, he had been able to pass from bodies to the external sense, from the external sense to the internal sense, from internal sense to the reasoning power, from the reasoning power to the use of intelligence, and from intelligence to the divine Light. Particularly important is the final transition from the level of reason which judges whatever is received from the senses – and presumably formulates propositions – to the level of intellect where that which is (exists) is glimpsed "in the flash of a trembling looking" (*in ictu trepidantis aspectus*).[52]

Within the medieval period, Meister Eckhart reveals considerable interest in the former passage. He inserts it strategically into his exegesis of the statement in *Exodus* "I am who Am" which begins his *Exposition of the Book of Exodus* and combines it not only with various interpretations of the "I am" including the identity of essence and existence indicated by the non-copulative propositional form *secundum adiacens*,[53] but also with several readings of the "I am who am" such as the purity of **[136]** affirmation excluding all negation with respect to God, the self-reflection of the deity in and above itself, and the bubbling or parturition of God as light from light.[54] The fourth point of his exegesis of the lemma – where the citation of Augustine actually occurs – is of particular importance. Close inspection of this passage shows that, although both Augustine and Eckhart begin by discussing the grammatical form of questions and statements, only the latter completes the argument by introducing the notion of the existential statement. Thus, whereas Augustine uses the *ictus* to mark the difference between the statement "God is Truth" and the utterance "Truth" Eckhart uses it in order to mark the difference between the predicative statement "God is Truth" and the existential statement "God is (exists)".[55] Nevertheless, these differences should be taken as evidence that Eckhart is enriching rather than abandoning Augustine's original teaching.

51 Augustine, *De Trinitate* VIII. 1. 2–2.3.

52 Id., *Confessiones* VII. 17, ed. L. Verheijen (Turnhout: Brepols, 1981).

53 The medieval distinction between *secundum adiacens* (i. e. where "is" immediately follows the subject in propositions such as "a man is" or a man is not") and *tertium adiacens* (i. e. where "is" lies between subject and predicate in propositions like "a man is just") was derived from Aristotle, *De Interpretatione* 10, 19b 19–22 via Boethius' commentary.

54 Eckhart, *Expositio in librum Exodi* 14–18, ed. H. Fischer-J. Koch-K.Weiss, *Die lateinischen Werke* II (Kohlhammer: Stuttgart, 1992). One could perhaps feel justified in arguing that a non-copulative propositional form is not the same thing as a non-propositional form *tout court*. However, Eckhart's reference to the former in combination with his citation of Augustine's remark about the *ictus* suggests that these ideas are fused in his mind.

55 *Ibid*., 18.

At this point, we may perhaps shift our attention from the *logical* category to the *noetic-ontological* category distinguished in the earlier discussion of non-discursiveness in Plotinus' thought.

Timeless dialectic

The first element in the conceptual structure of our problematic – i. e. that of the nature of non-discursive thinking and of the relation between non-discursive and discursive thinking – within the *noetic-ontological* category, was timeless dialectic. The most important example of this in the period of transition between ancient and medieval philosophy occurs in connection with the exegesis of the six days of creation.

The metaphysical interpretation of the opening verses of *Genesis* which extends through the first six books of Augustine's *On the Literal Interpretation of Genesis* is based almost exclusively on the notion of timeless dialectic.[56] According to the commentator, the things that scripture has separated into a narrative order correspond not to temporal actions on the part of the creator, but to quasi-temporal phases of angelic or human thinking.[57] This "spiritual cognition" (*cognitio spiritalis*) **[137]** is particularly associated with the number 6, a number whose perfection as the sum of its divisors reflects the perfection of God's creation.[58] What we have termed the timeless dialectic unfolds as three overlapping structures. The first dialectical structure seems to be based on the metaphysical notion of Being, and distinguishes four modes whereby God produces each created thing: in the divine Word, "in angelic cognition" (*in cognitione angelorum*), "in its proper genus" (*in genere proprio*), and with respect to the divine Goodness – these being denoted by the phrases "Let there be", "And it was made", "And God made", and "And God saw that it was good", respectively.[59] According to the second dialectical structure which seemingly exploits the metaphysical notions of Same and Other, each created thing can be understood with respect to the angelic cognition through the presence of its form – indicated by the term "day" -, through the beginning of the presence of its form – indicated by the term "morning" -, through the absence of its form – indicated by the term "night" -, and through

56 The one other example of timeless dialectic in Augustine occurs at *De Quantitate Animae* 34. 78–35. 79, ed. W. Hörmann (Wien: Hoelder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1986). Here, it is argued that the seven levels of contemplation constituting our path of ascent to God can be activated "simultaneously" (*simul*). It is significant that this timeless dialectic is applied to the human rather than the angelic sphere.

57 Augustine, *De Genesi ad Litteram* I. 2, 6. 17–7. 2; I. 15, 22. 5–14; II. 6, 41. 19–42. 4; IV. 1, 93. 1–94. 10; IV. 26, 125. 3-IV. 27, 126. 18, ed. J. Zycha (Wien: Tempsky, 1894).

58 *Ibid*., IV. 2, 96. 11–98. 22; IV. 6, 102. 18-IV. 7, 103. 21; IV. 21, 120. 8–121. 10; IV. 25, 124. 18–125. 2.

59 *Ibid*., I. 3, 7. 3-I. 4, 8. 21; I. 7, 10. 23-I. 8, 11. 13; II. 6, 42. 5-II. 8, 45. 19. At *De Gen. ad Litt.* III. 20, 86. 5–87. 26 Augustine notes that with respect to angels and mankind, the second and third modes coincide, but with respect to other creatures, these modes are distinct.

the beginning of the absence of its form – indicated by the term "evening".[60] Since the term "morning" can signify not only *a*. the "beginning of the presence" (*initium praesentiae*) of a creature's form but also *b*. the "referral" (*se referre*) of that form to God and *c*. the "beginning of another creature" (*initium condendae alterius*), the quasi-temporal phase denoted by this term serves as connector between the first cycle of angelic cognition and the second and between the second cycle and the third, until the sequence of six cycles is complete.[61] The third dialectical structure seems to be based on the metaphysical notions of Rest and Motion[62] and distinguishes two modes whereby God rests with respect to each created thing – in producing no further kind of creature, and in being not dependent on that creature -, and one mode whereby each created thing rests with respect to God – in being dependent on God, all these modes being denoted by the phrase "God rested on the seventh day".[63] What we have termed the timeless dialectic has some further noteworthy features. In Augustine's opinion, scripture speaks of "alternation" (*alternatim*) rather than "simultaneity" (*simul*) in order to emphasize an order **[138]** of priority especially between object and subject of knowledge.[64] This concept of *quasi*-temporality may perhaps be understood through the analogy of light whose movement of diffusion through a space seems to be a static presence in that space.[65]

It is interesting to note that the methodological principles underlying Augustine's treatment of intellect in the specific sense of angelic intellect are diametrically opposed to the methodological principles advocated by Macrobius in his *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*. The latter considers the philosophers' attitude to the possibility of applying figurative discourse to the higher principles and observes that they speak of Soul, the powers inhabiting the elements, and the lower gods by using "mythical narratives" (*fabulosa*), but of the Mind containing the originative Forms of things – which the Greeks call *Noys* ("Intellect") –, and of the supreme God – which the Greeks call *Tagathon* ("the Good") – only by using "similitudes and examples" (*similitudines et exempla*).[66] Macrobius seems to be opposing connected discourses such as the myth of the charioteer in Plato's *Phaedrus* to isolated symbols such as the analogy of the sun in Plato's *Republic*

60 *Ibid*., IV. 21, 120. 8-IV. 28, 127. 21. Cf. I. 9, 11. 25-I. 12, 18. 24; I. 17, 23. 20–26. 19; II. 14, 53. 24–56. 2; IV. 17, 113. 28-IV. 18, 116. 5; IV. 25, 124. 18–125. 2.

61 *Ibid*., I. 17, 23. 20–26. 19; IV. 18, 115. 11–116. 5, IV. 22, 121. 11-IV. 24, 124. 17.

62 The structure is based on both Rest and Motion because God ceases to act (= rests) in producing no further kind of creature but continues to act (= moves) in sustaining what he has produced.

63 Augustine, *De Gen. ad Litt.* IV. 10, 106. 14-IV. 18, 115. 10; IV. 18, 116. 25-IV. 19, 118. 26.

64 *Ibid*., IV. 29, 127. 22-IV. 32, 130. 25; IV. 33, 132. 14-IV. 35, 136. 27. Cf. II. 6, 41. 19–42. 4.

65 *Ibid*., IV. 34, 133. 20ff. The notion of symbolizing a timeless dialectic with a maximal motion of some kind recurs in Nicholas of Cusa's explanation of the *Possest* by using the image of the spinning top. See Nicholas of Cusa, *De Possest* 18. 1–20. 11, ed. R. Steiger (Hamburg: Meiner, 1973).

66 Macrobius, *Commentarius in Somnium Scipionis* I. 2, 13–16, ed. M. Armisen-Marchetti (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2001).

as instances of mythical narrative and similitude or example, respectively,[67] and to be arguing that an object of temporal and multiple character can be denoted by a figurative discourse of the former type but an object of non-temporal and unitary nature only by a figurative discourse of the latter type.[68] Augustine's argument that the account of the six days of angelic cognition is literal rather than allegorical does not diminish the opposition between the methodological approaches to the treatment of intellect pursued by Augustine and Macrobius.[69]

At any rate, Eriugena is one medieval thinker who continues along the trajectory established by Augustine.[70] He extends the latter's approach by combining it with the Dionysian theory of divine names, by contrasting it with the less metaphysical theory of Basil and Ambrose, and by adding numerous elements of his own **[139]** creation. Eriugena broadly follows the earlier theory in understanding the Word as "a six-fold quantity of intelligible days" (*senaria quantitas dierum intelligibilium*),[71] and in associating various utterances – "Let there be light", "And darkness was over the face of the abyss", and "And God separated the light from the dark" – with the six intelligible moments. However, the metaphysical principles denoted by these utterances are no longer simply the material and formal aspects of created things with respect to angelic or human cognition but – in the more explicitly idealist system of Eriugena – various aspects of the creating and created primordial causes and of their relation to their created and not creating effects both in reality and in cognition. Thus, "Let there be light" signifies the "procession" (*processio*) of the primordial causes into their effects, "And darkness was over the face of the abyss" signifies the "incomprehensible nature" (*incomprehensibilitas naturae*) of the primordial causes, and "And God separated the light from the dark" the separation of "knowledge" (*notitia*) of the effects from the "non-knowledge" (*obscuritas*) of their causes.[72]

Absence of the inferential process: preliminary observations

The second element in the conceptual structure of our problematic, within the *noetic-ontological* category, was absence of the inferential process. The most

67 At *ibid.* I. 2, 15 he explicitly cites the latter.

68 At *ibid.* I. 2. 14 he says that objects of the second type transcend "discourse" (*sermo*) and "thinking" (*cogitatio*).

69 One should note that the opposition between the two authors really amounts to a differing attitude to the *expression* of non-discursive thinking not to the existence of such thinking (which is accepted by both). On the question of expression, see n. 1.

70 See Eriugena, *Periphyseon* III, 3308–3316, ed. Jeauneau for acknowledgement of agreement with Augustine on the general question of timeless dialectic. However, departure from Augustine's approach with respect to many points of detail is also noted. See *ibid*., III, 2978–2980, 3086–3091, etc.

71 *Ibid*., III. 2947–2950. At *ibid*., III. 3332–3335 Eriugena explains that God created "inserting no intervals of times or places" (*nullis temporum spatiis vel locorum interpositis*).

72 *Ibid*., III. 2965–3082.

important example of this in the period of transition between ancient and medieval philosophy occurs in connection with the doctrine of the three hypostases.

Macrobius introduces this doctrine at several points in his *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*.[73] In one passage, he considers the application of the number 1 – i. e. the mode of unity attributable – to the three principles. When referred to the supreme God, unity is not of the kind found among lower powers. Regarding Mind, he notes that unity resides in its "ignorance of temporal change" (*vices temporum nescire*) and in the "eternity present" (*quod adest . . . aevum*) to it, and also that it produces and contains in itself innumerable "species of genera" (*generum species*) while remaining undivided numerically. When applied to Soul, unity is something retained in its distribution to bodies.[74] In another passage, Macrobius explains the interrelation between the three principles specifically in terms of processes of emanation of power and of processes of looking.[75] Thus, God or the Supreme Cause created Mind from himself with the overflowing of his power. Mind, insofar as it "looks towards" (*inspicit*) its father, **[140]** maintains his likeness, but insofar as it "looks towards" (*respiciens*) the lower, creates Soul from itself. Soul, insofar as it looks towards the father, "takes on his form" (*induitur*), but insofar as it looks towards the lower, it descends into Body.[76] Macrobius' doctrine is noteworthy for emphasizing the second principle's simultaneous and intuitive – i. e. non-inferential – handling of its object(s).[77]

The statement just summarized represents the fullest account of the theory of three hypostases available during the early Middle Ages. Generally speaking, the doctrine is stated in Plotinus' terms as a structure consisting of three principles. But already in Christian antiquity, the doctrine of three hypostases was also evolving in significant new directions.

In *On the Consolation of Philosophy*, Boethius attempts to explain how evils can occur within a divinely ordered world. He begins this argument by contrasting the administration of things as "Providence" (*providentia*) which is "enfolded" (*complecti*) within God's intellect, and the administration of things as "Fate" (*fatum*) which is "unfolded" (*explicata*) into places and times, and by arguing that what is enfolded in the former is "the same as" (*eadem vero*) what is unfolded in the latter and that the latter depends upon and proceeds from the former. He further argues that whatever is part of the connected temporal order also necessarily falls under God's simple Form although whatever falls under the simple divine Form is not necessarily part of the orderly temporal nexus, and also that whatever is further from the God's mind "is more tightly implicated

73 In addition to the passage already discussed earlier.

74 Macrobius, *Commentarius in Somnium Scipionis* I. 6, 7–9.

75 These processes also correspond to a timeless dialectic of the kind described earlier.

76 Macrobius, *Comm. in Somn. Scip.* I. 14, 6–9.

77 This applies to this principle's handling of its higher object (God) at least.

in the connections of Fate" (*maioribus fati nexibus implicatur*).[78] The relation between non-inferential and inferential thinking implied here is similar to that suggested by the previous text. But since Providence corresponds to Intellect and Fate to Soul in Plotinus' system, we can see that two significant transformations of the ancient doctrine have occurred. First, Intellect has become assimilated to God. Second, Intellect and Soul have become two modalities of God's relation to the creature.[79]

During the Middle Ages, William of Conches develops a predominantly *Macrobian* version of the doctrine of three hypostases in his *Glosses on Macrobius*. He furthers the assimilation of Intellect to God within a larger project of harmonizing the Platonic doctrine of the three principles with the Christian dogma of the three persons of the Trinity. Although the Platonic theory is understood strictly as a figure of the Christian truth, the translation of the former into the latter takes the direct form of equating the Good, Intellect, and Soul with the Father, Son or Wisdom, and Holy Spirit.[80] The importance of non-inferential thinking is emphasized along **[141]** traditional lines when William argues that Intellect or Wisdom knows all things "simultaneously, in presence, and in the same moment" (*simul et praesentialiter in eodem momento*).[81] Thierry of Chartres develops a predominantly *Boethian* version of the doctrine of three hypostases in his *Lectures on Boethius'* "*On the Trinity*." He furthers the assimilation of Intellect to God and the interpretation of Intellect and Soul as two modalities of God's relation to the creature[82] within a larger project of harmonizing the Platonic doctrine of the three principles with the Christian dogma of the three persons of the Trinity. Again the Platonic theory is understood as a figure of the Christian truth, although the translation of the former into the latter now takes the indirect form of equating the Good, Intellect, and Soul first with "Absolute Necessity" (*absoluta necessitas*), "Necessity of Enfolding" (*necessitas complexionis*), and "Determinate Possibility" (*determinata possibilitas*)[83] and second with Father, Son or Wisdom, and Holy Spirit. Since the third term unfolds from the second as temporal sequence from eternity, non-inferential thinking of the traditional kind seems to be attributed to Necessity of Enfolding.[84]

78 Boethius, *De Consolatione Philosophiae* IV, pr. 6, 8–17, ed. Moreschini.

79 On the dialectic of negation and affirmation implied here see p. 130 and n. 23.

80 William of Conches, *Glosae super Macrobium* 1A, 125. 5–127. 33; 3A, 165. 11–169. 56; 3BC, 172. 22–179. 95, ed. H. Rodnite-Lemay [Diss., Columbia University, New York 1972].

81 *Ibid*., 3BC, 176. 62–75.

82 In this context, Thierry will speak of "modes" (*modi*) and "considerations" (*considerationes*).

83 Thierry of Chartres, *Lectiones in Boethii de Trinitate* 2, 9, 157. 86–91. This structure is derived from passages in Boethius' *De Consolatione Philosophiae* and Aristotle's *De Interpretatione* and also includes "absolute possibility" (*absoluta possibilitas*) as a fourth term. For Thierry's use of the overtly Boethian terminology of *complicatio-explicatio* see *Lect. in De Trin.* 2, 10, 157. 11–158. 16. For his explicit Trinitarian interpretation of the first three terms see *Commentum in Boethii de Trinitate* 2. 39, 80. 82–2. 40, 81. 99.

84 Thierry of Chartres, *Lect. in De Trin.* 2. 5, 155. 41–47.

The four criteria revisited

In order to pursue this matter further, we must return briefly to our original question regarding the nature of non-discursive thinking and the relation between non-discursive and discursive thinking. We must recalibrate our approach to this question in terms of the four criteria of suspension of the law of contradiction, non-propositional form, timeless dialectic, and absence of the inferential process. Most of the passages considered so far in this essay have tended to maintain a distinction between non-discursive and discursive thinking either explicitly or implicitly. **[142]** However, some continuity between the two kinds of thinking is suggested by other texts written in the late ancient period and then imitated or developed by medieval thinkers.[85]

The four criteria of non-discursive thinking established on the basis of Plotinus' *Enneads* can generally be confirmed from the writings of Proclus. However, study of this later ancient Platonist also supplies us with information specifically relevant to the application of the fourth criterion.

According to Proclus' *Elements of Theology*, the entire order of soul – a principle defined by its possession of an eternal substance and a temporal activity[86] – can be divided into a monadic "un-participated" (*amethektos*) soul – corresponding to Plotinus' hypostasis of Soul – and a series of "participated" (*methektai*) souls.[87] It can also be divided into "divine" (*theiai*) souls, intermediate souls, and "partial" (*merikai*) souls[88] – corresponding to the Platonic world soul and planetary souls, to demonic souls, and to human souls respectively –, the divine souls always participating in divine intellects, the intermediate souls always participating in intellects, and the partial souls participating intermittently in intellects.[89] These two divisions overlap to the extent that the class of participated souls includes divine, intermediate, and partial souls, while the class of divine souls includes the un-participated soul and the divine participated souls.

Proclus' *Commentary on the Parmenides* discusses this intermittent intellectual activity on the part of the human soul in some detail and, given that intellect is characterized by non-discursive and soul by discursive thinking, provides us with insight into the transition between the non-discursive and the discursive levels as such.[90] According to this commentary, the divine soul's thinking is partly the

85 On the epistemological importance of this shift, see n. 1.

86 Proclus, *Elementatio Theologica*, props. 191 and 192, ed. E. R. Dodds, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963). The unparticipated soul – equivalent to an intellect according to the principle stated in prop. 112 – is the exception. It has eternal substance *and* activity.

87 *Ibid*., props. 191–192 and 196. Cf. prop. 164. For the general metaphysical principle underlying this division, see props, 23–24.

88 *Ibid*., prop. 184. Cf. props. 201–206.

89 *Ibid*., prop. 184. Here, the intermittent participation is described as "changing from intelligence to non-intelligence" (*metaballousa apo nou eis anoian*). Cf. props. 202, 204, and 206. For the general metaphysical principle involved in this distinction, see prop. 63.

90 For the contrast between the non-discursive thinking of Intellect and the discursive thinking of Soul in general, see for example Proclus, *Commentarius in Parmenidem* V. 993. 22–994. 9, ed. C. Steel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) and VI. 1079. 27–1082. 19, ed. V. Cousin (Paris: Durand,

same as and partly different from intellectual thinking, taking the form of "transitional incursions" (*metabaseis tōn epibolōn*) which divide the "compact activity" (*athroa energeia*) of the latter.[91] These transitional incursions seem to be temporal moments of participation in eternity through intuitive vision which can occur in a range between total continuity and isolated occasion.[92] Apparently for Proclus, whereas the **[143]** divine soul in its sameness and difference divides the intellect's compact activity by transitional incursions which are continuous, the human soul in its sameness and difference divides that compact activity by transitional moments which occur more rarely.[93] In fact, between the two extremes of intellect's completely non-discursive thinking and soul's fully discursive thinking, we should perhaps envision a kind of *incursive* thinking which is more or less intermittent in character, depending on the precise level of divine or human soul to which it should be assigned.[94]

According to the *Elements of Theology*, it is because the partial soul "descends as a whole" (*holē kateisi*) into the temporal world and is not divided into a part that remains above and a part which descends that it participates only intermittently in intellect.[95] The precise wording of this passage indicates an explicit correction of Plotinus' celebrated but somewhat unusual teaching to the effect that part of the human soul is "always in the intelligible" (*en tōi noētōi aei*) and therefore has continuous intellectual activity of which the whole soul may be unaware.[96] However, since subsequent principles always exhibit both a sameness and a difference with respect to their antecedents in emanative metaphysical systems, the disagreement between Proclus and Plotinus probably comes down to one of emphasis rather than substance.[97]

1864, repr. Hildesheim: Olms, 1961). So far, Proclus' doctrine can be seen as agreeing with Plotinus' with respect to all four criteria of non-discursive thinking distinguished on pp. 127–130 above.

91 *Ibid*., III. 807. 20–810. 15, ed. Steel. Cf. *ibid*., VII. 1165. 19, ed. Cousin "transitional activity" (*metabatikōs energeia*). Cf. *ibid*., III. 809. 5–7, ed. Steel "transitional touches and contacts" (*metabatikai thixeis kai epaphai*).

92 Since the transitional incursions represent openings into eternity, they imply the entire Platonic theory of participation and reversion. They cannot be reduced to the intuitive knowledge of first principles admitted by the Peripatetics (although such an intuitive knowledge ultimately derives from the transitional incursions). For intuitive knowledge cf. Proclus, *Commentarius in Euclidem* 240. 11–14, ed. G. Friedlein (Leipzig: Teubner, 1873).

93 See especially Id., *Comm. in Parm.* III. 809. 5–9, ed. Steel.

94 At *ibid*., I. 701. 24–702. 13 and 704. 9–18, ed. Steel. Proclus seems to associate Parmenides' and Zeno's discussions of the One-Being with higher and lower levels of incursive thinking, respectively. The entire dialectic of the second part of Plato's *Parmenides* obviously represents, for Proclus, an example of incursive thinking operating at the highest level. Proclus contrasts this method with the normal Aristotelian – i. e. discursive – approach in several passages. See especially *ibid*., V. 995. 26–996 13, ed. Steel where Aristotle's method is the lowest of four levels of "wandering" *(planē*), and *ibid*., V. 1007. 7–26, ed. Steel where Aristotle's method has a *mimetic* relation to that of Plato.

95 Proclus, *Elem. Theol*., prop. 211.

96 Plotinus, *Enneades* IV. 8. 8, 1–6. Cf. III. 4. 3, 21–27 and V. 1. 12, 3–10.

97 Thus, Proclus continues to argue that every soul contains in a secondary sense all the Forms which every intellect embraces in a primary sense. See Proclus, *Elem. Theol*., prop. 194.

It is well known that the writings of Proclus are the most important direct source of ancient Platonic philosophy for medieval thinkers from the middle of the thirteenth century onwards. William of Moerbeke's Latin translation of the *Elements of Theology* begins to have an impact in the generations of Thomas Aquinas, Dietrich of Freiberg, and Meister Eckhart. His Latin translation of the *Commentary on the Parmenides* is known to Berthold of Moosburg, although its doctrinal influence cannot be verified before Nicholas of Cusa. With respect to the question of the distinction or continuity between non-discursive and discursive thinking – our immediate **[144]** concern in the present essay – the influence of these texts must be taken into account.

Absence of the inferential process: from the discursive to the incursive

The second element in the conceptual structure of our problematic, within the *noetic-ontological* category, was absence of the inferential process. As argued earlier, the most important example of this in the period of transition between ancient and medieval philosophy occurs in connection with the doctrine of the three hypostases. We shall conclude by looking at some further texts.

Proclus summarizes the doctrine of the hypostases – as a fourfold enumeration together with body – in proposition 20 of his *Elements of Theology*. This proposition is found in the center of an extended analysis of the different levels of reality first, according to the absence or presence of motion and the type of motion: internally originating or externally originating,[98] and second, according to the structure of causes pre-containing effects[99] and the threefold structure of un-participated, participated, and participating terms.[100] The twentieth proposition and its attached proof argue, by invoking the principle that the participated term is always superior to the participating term,[101] as follows. Soul's essence is beyond Body because Body is moved externally but also – through participation in the self-motion of Soul – moved internally. The nature of Intellect is beyond Soul because Soul is self-moved but also – through participation in the "eternal intellection" (*to aei noein = id quod est semper intelligere*) of Intellect – un-moved. The One is beyond the substance of Intellect because Intellect "knows itself" (*noei gar heauton = intelligit se ipsum*) but also – through participation in unity – is unified.[102] In a general sense, Proclus is here stating the same doctrine with respect to the three hypostases and to Intellect's non-inferential process of thinking as was Macrobius. However, whereas Macrobius allowed Soul which operates discursively to identify with the non-discursive activity of Intellect – as Plotinus

98 Proclus [translated by Moerbeke], *Elem. Theol*., props. 14–17.
99 *Ibid*., props. 18–19 and 21–22.
100 *Ibid*., props. 23–24.
101 See *Ibid*., prop. 24.
102 *Ibid*., prop. 20, proof.

had suggested – Proclus restricts the discursively operating Soul to an *incursive* relation to the activity of Intellect. This is why he notes that, if eternal intellection were "primarily" (*prōtōs = primo*) in Soul, Intellect would not precede it in the order of the hypostases.[103]

The statement just summarized represents an account of the theory of three hypostases particularly influential during the late Middle Ages. However, the Proclean **[145]** version undergoes the same transformation as did the Macrobian at the hands of Christian writers in antiquity, i. e. with respect to the status of the hypostases as *principles*.

In *On the Consolation of Philosophy*, Boethius endeavors to explain how human free will can be reconciled with divine omniscience through relativity of viewpoints. This argument begins by stating three premises about human thinking which are then applied by analogy to divine thinking.[104] First, everything known is comprehended not "according to its own power" (*secundum sui vim*) but "more according to the power of the knower" (*secundum cognoscentium potius*). Second, the same object can be viewed in different ways as "a figure in a material substratum" (*figura in subiecta materia constituta*) – where sense is operating –, transcending this figure in a "universal consideration" (*universalis consideratio*) – where reason takes charge –, and transcending this universal in order to contemplate "that simple Form" (*illa simplex forma*) – where mind is operating. Third, the superior power "envelopes" (*amplectitur*) the lower power, whereas the inferior power does not envelope the higher.[105] The relation between non-inferential and inferential thinking implied here is similar to that suggested by the previous text. But since the mental power corresponds to Intellect and the rational power to Soul in Proclus' system, we can see that two significant transformations of the pagan doctrine have occurred. First, Intellect has become assimilated to Soul. Second, Intellect and Soul have become two modalities of the creature's relation to God.

During the Middle Ages, Dietrich of Freiberg develops a predominantly *Proclean* version of the doctrine of the three hypostases in his *On the Intellect and the Intelligible*. In a systematic attempt to present Proclus' thought in Aristotelian language, Dietrich explains that the knowledge of the agent intellect – corresponding to Proclus' intellective Soul, Intellect, or Soul participating in Intellect – is "nonvarying" (*non variatur*) and grasps its divine cause and the entire universe "in a single intuition" (*uno intuitu*) as it proceeds.[106] On the other hand, the possible intellect – corresponding to Proclus' rational Soul – grasps the agent intellect under the character of each reason (*ratio*) that may be involved, these

103 *Ibid*., prop. 20, proof, 14. 20–23, ed. H. Boese (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1987).

104 Since this argument is a continuation of the one considered earlier, the analogy between divine and human thinking becomes very clear. Thus, mental power in the present passage is analogous to Providence in the earlier and rational power in the present passage to Fate in the earlier.

105 Boethius, *De Consol. Philos.* V, pr. 4, 25–31, ed. Moreschini.

106 Dietrich of Freiberg, *De Intellectu et Intelligibili* II. 36. 3, ed. B. Mojsisch (Hamburg: Meiner, 1977).

reasons – which can eventually be specified as defining, inferential, or exemplary – being in the first instance not distinct from the corresponding reasons in God.[107] Dietrich's doctrine clearly furthers the assimilation of Intellect to Soul and increases the continuity between non-inferential and inferential thinking. Nicholas of Cusa develops a **[146]** predominantly *Boethian* version of the doctrine of three hypostases in his *The Layman on Mind*. In an argument which has roots in both Platonic and Aristotelian thought, Nicholas speaks of a faculty of reason which "syllogizes without mind" (*syllogizat sine mente*) – corresponding to Boethius' rational power – and might define a circle as "a figure from whose center all lines leading to the circumference are equal". He distinguishes this from a faculty of mind which "perfects the ratiocination" (*perficit ratiocinationem*) – corresponding to Boethius' mental power – and would intuit all magnitude in a point and an entire circle in its centre.[108] Nicholas' doctrine furthers both the assimilation of Intellect to Soul and the interpretation of Intellect and Soul as two modalities of the creature's relation to God, at the same time increasing the continuity of non-inferential and inferential thinking.

Conclusion

The problem concerning the distinction between non-discursive and discursive thinking in "Platonic" philosophy during the patristic and medieval periods is an extremely difficult one. It was in order to make at least its outline clear, even if some of its internal convolutions almost defy description, that a structural analysis based on the "four criteria" was initiated. This analysis has finally shown that patristic and medieval Platonists not only established a clear distinction between non-discursive and discursive thinking but also began to undermine their own distinction.

As our study of the fourth criterion has shown, Boethius had assimilated Intellect to either Soul or God and interpreted Intellect and Soul as two modalities of the relation between God and the creature, and Proclus had divided the emanative relation between Intellect and Soul into a series of stages and understood it as a gradation of continuous, intermittent, and occasional participations. Medieval philosophers therefore acquired from these two ancient sources the means of conceiving the continuity between non-discursive and discursive thinking on the basis of either dialectical modality or emanative unfolding or both.[109] The epistemological

107 *Ibid*., III. 29. 1–3 and 37. 3–38. 1.

108 Nicholas of Cusa, *Idiota de Mente* 5, 84. 3–6; 7, 103. 1–13 and 7, 105, 7–15, ed. R. Steiger (Hamburg: Meiner, 1983).

109 At this point, we must disagree with certain conclusions of the otherwise excellent article about Proclus' *Commentary on the Parmenides* by C. Steel (n. 5 earlier). This author points to a distinction between Proclus' attitude to negative theology on the one hand, which emerges from his reading of Plato's dialogue and does not imply suspension of the law of contradiction – at least in the manner suggested by the "first criterion" of the present essay -, and Cusanus' view of this theology on the other, which is more influenced by ps.-Dionysius and does advocate suspension

consequences **[147]** of these developments should not be under-estimated. We noted at the beginning of this essay that "Platonic" philosophers always wanted to conceptualize the distinction between non-discursive and discursive thinking very clearly and also that, since conceptualization as such seems to be totally dependent on discursiveness, these philosophers could in the final analysis only conceptualize the non-discursive in a discursive manner. If the continuity between the two kinds of thinking can now be conceived in the manner indicated by our study of the fourth criterion, both the necessity of this mode of conceptualization and also its validity become intelligible perhaps for the first time.

That the obvious distinction between non-discursive and discursive thinking in "Platonic" philosophy during the patristic and medieval periods is also continuity on a deeper level has a further consequence. It is quite understandable that thinkers within this philosophical tradition would often attempt to domesticate the non-discursive sphere by calling the incommensurability of its negative dialectical moment "faith" or the upward tension of its emanative conversion "love". But on the basis of what we have now discovered, it is perhaps even more understandable that the *Platonici* could never completely avoid the temptation of viewing these phenomena as an alternative and "higher" form of rationality.

of the law (pp. 582–585, 598–599). Now it cannot be denied that there is a clear difference of emphasis between these two philosophers. However, Steel's interpretation pays insufficient attention *a.* to the different exegetical registers in which Proclus writes (the *Parmenides Commentary* being only one of these), and *b.* to the emanative *continuity* existing between intellects and souls (together with what we have termed the *incursive* relation between the two).

5

THE PSEUDONYMITY OF DIONYSIUS THE AREOPAGITE AND THE PLATONIC TRADITION

[99] In this paper, I want to draw attention to a certain paradox in the history of Platonism – especially the Christian Platonism or Neoplatonism of the western Middle Ages – namely, the paradox associated with the pseudonymity of Dionysius the Areopagite.[1] Put in simple terms, we are confronted by the facts that the Platonism of Dionysius remains an enigma for the modern reader, whereas for the medieval reader, Dionysius is the non-enigmatic element within an otherwise enigmatic notion of Platonism.[2]

1 Wolfgang Speyer, "Fälschung, pseudepigraphische freier Erfindung und 'echte religiöse Pseudepigraphie,'" in *Pseudepigrapha* I, Pseudopythagorica, Lettres de Platon, Littérature pseudépigraphique juive (Entretiens sur l'Antiquité Classique 18), ed. Kurt von Fritz (Genève: Fondation Hardt, 1972), p. 333 with commendable terminological precision notes the difference between *pseudonymity* (an author's concealment of his own name by freely inventing an alternative name) and *pseudepigraphy* (an author's concealment of his own name by adopting that of a famous writer or personage of the past). Therefore, in Dionysius the Areopagite's case, we should talk of pseudepigraphy rather than pseudonymity. We shall, however, retain the term *pseudonymity* here because its lexical association with *anonymity* reflects the historical connection between the two phenomena – writings transmitted without authorial attribution often turned into writings with false authorial attribution.

2 It seems likely that the pseudonymity of Dionysius was influenced by two earlier and distinct traditions of pseudonymic writing: the Graeco-Roman (exemplified by the Pythagorean treatises of Ocellus Lucanus and Timaeus Locrus) and the Judeo-Christian (of which biblical imitations like *Enoch, Noah,* and *Jubilees* would be examples). As significant as the fact of pseudonymity in these traditions would be the purposes of pseudonymity: to establish a particular interpretation of a philosophical doctrine – for example, the "Pythagoreanism" of Plato in the case of Timaeus Locrus – or the agreement between different philosophical doctrines. On the Pythagorean pseudonymic tradition, see Holger Thesleff, "On the Problem of the Doric Pseudo-Pythagorica. An Alternative Theory of Date and Purpose," in *Pseudepigrapha* I, ed. K. von Fritz, pp. 59–87. On the Biblical pseudonymic material, see Morton Smith, "Pseudonymity in the Israelite Literary Tradition," *ibid*., pp. 189–215. Of course, from Dionysius' viewpoint, the thirteen *Letters* attributed to Plato – which are almost certainly not genuine – might have functioned as a literary paradigm. On the pseudonymic traditions of antiquity in general, see J. A. Sint, *Pseudonymität im Altertum*, *ihre Formen und ihre Gründe* (Innsbruck: Wagner, 1960) and Wolfgang Speyer, *Die literarische Fälschung im heidnischen und christlichen Altertum* (München: C.H. Beck, 1971).

[100] That Dionysius remains an enigma for modern readers is the conclusion, to cite an exemplary recent judgment, of Paul Rorem in his useful commentary on the *Corpus Areopagiticum*. Having reviewed the first philological arguments against the apostolic status of these texts by the humanists Valla and Erasmus and the establishment of their dependence upon fifth-century Neoplatonism by H. Koch and by J. Stiglmayr,[3] he writes:

> But the name Pseudo-Dionysius is more than awkward, and more than distastefully pejorative to some lingering loyalists. It also reflects the frustration that still marks the search for the author's true identity and real name. While Koch and Stiglmayr made a breakthrough in disproving that a first-century Dionysius authored the corpus, they did not succeed in establishing a convincing case for anyone else as the actual author, despite Stiglmayr's years of efforts. In fact, almost a century of concerted efforts by numerous **[101]** specialists with their various proposals has not yielded even a central candidate or two, much less a firm identification by a scholarly consensus. Hypotheses about authors have ranged from writers of the early second century to the early sixth, from the famous to the obscure, from Alexandrian and Cappadocian Christians to Proclean Neoplatonists. The hunt for the true author, once pressed in full force, has come to an almost complete halt. The few scholars who devote themselves to Pseudo-Dionysian studies concentrate on the texts themselves and their influence, rather than venturing into historical hypotheses. Perhaps the corpus will never be convincingly tied to anyone known from other extant works, since attempts to do so have been thorough and fruitless. The failure of such attempts would mean that no other writings by the Dionysian author have survived, with or without the pseudonym. The most we can say with confidence is that the author reflects a mixture of late fifth-century Syrian Christianity and Athenian Neoplatonism. While this is only the identification of a type of author rather than of a specific

3 See J. Stiglmayr, "Der Neuplatoniker Proclus als Vorlage des sogen. Dionysius Areopagita in der Lehre vom Übel," *Historisches Jahrbuch* 16 (1895), pp. 253–273 and 721–748, and "Das Aufkommen der pseudo-dionysischen Schriften und ihr Eindringen in die christliche Literatur bis zum Laterankonzil 649," *IV. Jahresbericht des öffentlichen Privatgymnasium an der Stella Matutina zu Feldkirch* (1895), pp. 3–6; and H. Koch, "Proklus als Quelle des Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita in der Lehre vom Bösen," *Philologus* 54 (1895), pp. 438–454, and *Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita in seinen Beziehungen zum Neuplatonismus und Mysterienwesen* (Mainz, 1900). For more recent work along the same lines, see Henri-Dominique Saffrey, "Un lien objectif entre le Pseudo-Denys et Proclus," *Studia Patristica* 9 = *Texte und Untersuchungen* 94 (Berlin, 1966), pp. 98–105, and "Nouveaux liens objectifs entre le Pseudo-Denys et Proclus," *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 63 (1979), pp. 3–16. Stephen Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena: An Investigation of the Prehistory and Evolution of the Pseudo-Dionysian Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 1978) is a detailed philosophical study of Dionysius' work against the background of fifth-century pagan Neoplatonism.

individual, to say anything further would be more speculation than this general study could sustain.[4]

We might add to this judicious assessment by saying that for us the enigma of Dionysius' *Platonism* lies partly in his name: the author of the *CA* clearly attempts to present his work as though it were a first-century and apostolic document not only in adopting the name of St. Paul's Athenian convert but in choosing as fictitious addressees of his *Letters* "the monk Gaius" (recalling the addressee of the Biblical third Letter of John), "Polycarp, a hierarch" (recalling Polycarp of Smyrna to whom the seventh Letter of Ignatius of Antioch is addressed), and even "John the theologian, apostle, and evangelist, an exile on the island of Patmos."[5] **[102]** Another side to the enigma is presented by the association of Dionysius with "Hierotheos" – said to be the religious initiator of Dionysius and his correspondent Timothy – a figure whose pedagogical relation to Dionysius is second only to that of St. Paul, the author of such learned treatises as the *Theological Elements* and the *Hymns of Yearning*, and the ecstatic participant together with James and Peter in the vision of the mortal body that bore God.[6] The enigma of Dionysius' Platonism also lies in his writings: the author of the *CA* refers to the titles and summarizes the contents of other treatises which he claims to have written – the *Theological Representations* preceding and the *Symbolical Theology* following the *Divine Names* in methodological sequence, and the apparently independent texts *Divine Hymns, The Properties and Ranks of the Angels, The Soul*, and the *Intelligible and Sensible* – all of which are non-extant or fictitious.

It seems to me that the assessment of Rorem raises a question which we need to think about even if it remains an undecidable question: Did this *pseudo*-Dionysius

4 Paul Rorem, *Pseudo-Dionysius. A Commentary on the Texts and an Introduction to their Influence* (New York-Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 17–18. For a summary of the various proposals regarding authorship of the *CA*, see Ronald F. Hathaway, *Hierarchy and the Definition of Order in the Letters of Pseudo-Dionysius* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1969), pp. 31–35.

5 The literary genre itself is significant here, its having been noted by scholars that the epistolary form – and the reported communication between divine and human – is often associated with pseudonymity. See Ronald Syme, "Fraud and Literature," in *Pseudepigrapha* I, ed. K. von Fritz, pp. 5–6, Morton Smith "Pseudepigraphy in the Israelite Literary Tradition," *ibid*., pp. 212–13, and Wolfgang Speyer, "Fälschung, pseudepigraphische freier Erfindung und 'echte religiöse Pseudepigraphie'," *ibid*., pp. 336, 356.

6 The title of Hierotheos' treatise *Theological Elements* seems suspiciously to recall the title of a work by Proclus. However, I.P. Sheldon-Williams, "The ps.-Dionysius and the Holy Hierotheos," *Studia Patristica* 8 = *Texte und Untersuchungen* 94 (Berlin 1966), pp. 108–17 argues that "Hierotheos" was a historical individual and a Chrustian bishop who was conversant with the post-Plotinian but pre-Proclean Neoplatonism.

the Areopagite actually connive in the formation of his own enigma?[7] A major piece of evidence **[103]** in favor of such connivance is the combination of two arguments which underlie his thinking. The first is explicitly stated in *Letter* 9 where it is argued that the theological tradition has a double aspect: on the one hand the ineffable and the mysterious which is symbolic and employs initiation and on the other hand the open and evident which is philosophical and employs demonstration.[8] In this passage and several others, Dionysius continues by explaining that symbolism has been utilized by the sacred writers both to protect the understanding of the highest truths from the multitude of the irreligious and to accommodate those understandings to the varying capacities of the hierarchy.[9] The second argument is implicit yet omnipresent in the Dionysian writings. Basically, it is an expansion of the notion first stated in Plato's *Timaeus* that words, in order to be interpreters (*exēgētai*) of things, must be akin (*sungeneis*) to the latter.[10] When combined with the doctrine of the same dialogue that the world is a living creature[11] and the teaching of the *Phaedrus* that a discourse should be fashioned like a living creature,[12] the exegetical theory of later Neoplatonism emerges whereby in any Platonic dialogue one can discover as the analogue of matter the characters, time, and place, corresponding to form the style of the dialogue, as the analogue of nature the mode of exposition, corresponding to soul the arguments of the text, as the analogue of intellect the problem which is addressed, and finally corresponding to God the good at which the dialogue aims.[13] The author of the *CA* clearly learned philosophy in the same context which produced this exegesis, with the result that he not only established an analogy between the sequence of **[104]** addressees of his ten letters and the ordering of ranks in the ecclesiastical hierarchy – the communications are with a monk, then a deacon, then a priest, then a less authoritative hierarch, then a more authoritative hierarch, and finally an evangelist[14] – but he also exploits parallels

7 This is related to the question whether the author of the *CA* intended his pseudonymic writing to be understood by its potential readers as an authentic production or as a literary fiction – irrespective of the approach chosen by the later tradition of Dionysianism. That pseudonymic works were often simply intended to be taken as such follows from the widespread practice in the higher schools of antiquity of composing fictitious speeches and letters as though by historical personages as a form of rhetorical training. On this point see Ronald Syme, "Fraud and Imposture," in *Pseudepigrapha* I, ed. K. von Fritz, p. 6 and Morton Smith, "Pseudepigraphy in the Israelite Literary Tradition," *ibid*., p. 215.

8 Dionysius, *Letter* 9, 1105C-1108B. The text of Dionysius is cited according to *Corpus Dionysiacum*, ed. Beate R. Suchla, Gunter Heil, and A.M. Ritter, 2 vols., *Patristische Texte und Studien* 33 and 36 (Berlin-New York, 1990–91).

9 Cf. *On the Celestial Hierarchy* 2.2, 140A-B and 2.5, 145A-B; *On the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* I. 5, 377A.

10 Plato, *Timaeus* 29B.

11 Plato, *Tim*. 30A-31B.

12 Plato, *Phaedrus*, 264C.

13 Anonymous, *Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy* 5. 16–17.

14 Dionysius, *Letter* 8, by being addressed again to a monk, interrupts the sequence. On the author's probable reasons for deliberately interrupting the sequence, see Hathaway, *Hierarchy and the*

between segments of his longer treatises and principles in the metaphysical order. For example, in a passage of the *On Mystical Theology*, he associates the increasing multiplicity of the ontological procession with the greater length of the exposition of affirmative theology and the decreasing multiplicity of the ontological reversion with the smaller compass of the exposition of negative theology.[15] Moreover, successive chapters of the *On the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* exploit a particular kind of threefold pattern in the interpretation of baptism, synaxis, myron consecration, and other rituals, where the relations between the ontological phases of remaining, procession, and reversion are reflected in the textual relation between introduction, description, and contemplation (*theōria*).[16] If we now combine the explicit argument of *Letter* 9 about the concealment of truth with the implicit assumptions regarding the likeness between discourse and reality, the result is possibly the deliberate exploitation of mystery in connection with authorship, provenance, and composition of texts.

However, the fact that the Platonism of Dionysius constitutes an enigma for the modern reader will not provide our main topic. We shall rather direct our attention to the contrasting situation in which Dionysius becomes for the medieval reader the non-enigmatic element within an otherwise enigmatic notion of Platonism.

But how does Dionysius see himself within the tradition of (pagan) Platonism? The only passage within the *CA* providing **[105]** some answer to this question is the *Letter* 7 "To Polycarp, a hierarch," where the writer explains that he has never entered into controversy with the Greeks because people who engage in such disputes will maintain that their own part of the truth or semblance of truth is the real thing with an endless supply of arguments, and because the truth as it really is once established and manifested will overthrow all semblances of truth by its very presence. If the sophist Apollophanes levels against Dionysius the charge of using things Greek in order to attack the Greeks, one should more rightly reply with the counter-charge against this sophist of using things godly in order to attack God: a situation the more regrettable because the things at issue are not the materialistic and impassioned myths of those who "serve the creature rather than the creator" but the knowledge of beings – called philosophy by Apollophanes and the "wisdom of God" by the Apostle Paul – which elevates us to the First Cause of being and knowledge. Why does the sophist not worship the creative and sustaining cause, Dionysius asks, which he knows to exist through the order and motion of the cosmos? This God whose power is beyond description has produced many marvels: he not only stopped the sun and moon in their tracks but also prolonged a day to three times its usual length according to sacred scripture, such events being paralleled by miracles reported outside our tradition in the

Definition of Order, pp. 64–66 and Rorem, *Pseudo-Dionysius, A Commentary on the Texts*, pp. 6, 18, 21–23.

15 Dionysius, *On Mystical Theology* 3, 1033B-C.

16 See Dionysius, *EH* 2, 392A, 393A, 397A-B, etc. This format had been exploited in a Christian context before Dionysius. See Gregory of Nyssa's *Life of Moses*.

Persian sacred books. Apollophanes refuses to admit the veracity of these written reports. Yet Christ "who does great and marvelous things without number" also produced the extraordinary phenomenon of the moon hiding the sun at variance with the predicted pattern of planetary motions when the Savior was placed on the cross. Apollophanes and Dionysius actually witnessed this supernatural occurrence together in Heliopolis, the former even prophesying: "My dear Dionysius, these things portend changes in the doings of God."[17]

That the pagan opponent of Dionysius described in this letter is a Platonist emerges clearly from the reference to his knowledge **[106]** of beings which is contrasted with the corporealist mythologizing of the masses.[18] The text therefore establishes the viewpoint documented elsewhere among patristic authors where Platonic Being is identified with Pauline wisdom, the true elements within Plato's teaching are held to be Christian by definition, and the Platonists are prevented from becoming Christian only by their stubbornness. However, Dionysius' view of the relation between pagan Platonism and Christian Platonism can be articulated in a more precise philosophical manner by reflecting that the common doctrine is associated with a single vision which a pagan and a Christian who are contemporaries might share. This vision should be compared with the mystical experience described in Dionysius' *On Divine Names* where Dionysius enters into contemplation with his teacher Hierotheos and the Apostles – Christians who are probably not contemporaries – around the body of the Virgin Mary[19] and also the mystical experience described in Proclus' *Commentary on the Parmenides* where Proclus enters into contemplation with his teacher Syrianus and Plato himself – pagans who are definitely not contemporaries – around the "body" of Plato's dialogue *Parmenides*.[20] The result of this comparison is an account of an ontological framework and epistemological framework in which a vision would be shared in different degrees by Dionysius the fifth-century Christian, Apollophanes his pagan opponent, Dionysius the convert of St. Paul, and Proclus the Athenian Neoplatonist – a complex situation providing a philosophical rationale for Dionysius' choice of a pseudonym drawn from the apostolic age, for the textual parallelism with Proclus which modern scholarship has demonstrated, and for his apparent **[107]** conviction that apostolicity and Athenian Neoplatonism were mutually consistent. Of course, neither the text of *Letter* 7 nor the interpretative comparison proposed implies that pagan Platonism and Christian Platonism amount to the same thing in the eyes of Dionysius. What he seems to emphasize is that the former

17 Dionysius, *Letter* 7, 1077B–1081C.

18 As with other personal names cited by Dionysius, there is no way of determining whether "Apollophanes" represents a literary fiction or a real person. The former is suggested by the enormously convenient etymology (Apollo + *phainomai* ("I appear"). However, Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* VI. 19. 4–8 mentions a Neopythagorean of that name in the school of Origen. (This last point was brought to my attention by Maria di Pasquale Barbanti and Carlos Steel).

19 Dionysius, *On Divine Names* 3. 2, 681C–684A.

20 Proclus, *Commentary on the Parmenides* I, 617. 23–618. 8.

grasps the natural order of the cosmos, whereas the latter comprehends also the supernatural alteration of that order. However, the explanation of the miraculous in terms of the combination of the First Principle's ineffability and the First Principle's power seems to take us back towards pagan assumptions once again.

We have spoken of Dionysius as becoming for the medieval reader the non-enigmatic element within an otherwise enigmatic notion of Platonism.[21] How this situation comes about can perhaps best be understood by imagining three layers of development in the history of medieval Platonism rather than a single layer. Each of these represents a textual or doctrinal complex which pursues its own logic for the most part although interfering with the logic of the other complexes from time to time. The lowest layer – the common denominator of Western medieval Platonism – is Augustine.[22] This writer was responsible for establishing the uniquely Christian metaphysical paradigm against which all doctrinal developments have to be measured, this paradigm consisting primarily of the resituating of the temporal problematic from the margin to the centre of ontology, and of the consequent rethinking of causality in at least three respects: an emphasis upon the completion rather than the initiation of the causal process, the **[108]** suppression of intermediates within the hierarchy of causes and effects constituting the real world, and the introduction of new kinds of relation between the causal process and nothingness. These modifications of Platonic ontology have been widely discussed in the past. However, less attention has been paid to Augustine's important innovation in the hermeneutics of Platonism: his idea that the Platonic tradition from its founder onwards involves a strategy of concealment. The middle layer of development in the history of medieval Platonism is the figure of Dionysius the Areopagite which we have been calling the non-enigmatic element in the tradition. He is non-enigmatic because, thanks to the existence of a substantial corpus of texts and the acceptance of the apostolic status of their writer, his doctrinal authority could be relied upon. Forming a conceptual opposition with this, the highest layer of development in the history of medieval Platonism is an enigmatic element in the tradition which we can now specify as the heterogeneous group of other Platonists.[23] Any doctrinal authority was obviously problematic here,

21 On the debates concerning the authorship of the *CA* during the Middle Ages in general, see David Luscombe, "Denis the Pseudo-Areopagite in the Middle Ages from Hilduin to Lorenzo Valla," *Fälschungen im Mittelalter* I = Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Schriften 33. 1 (Hannover: Hahn, 1988), pp. 133–152.

22 For a summary of Augustine's role as textual-doctrinal source of medieval Platonism, see Stephen Gersh, "The Medieval Legacy from Ancient Platonism," in *The Platonic Tradition in the Middle Ages: A Doxographic Approach*, eds. Stephen Gersh and Maarten J. F. M. Hoenen (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2002), pp. 16–18, 24ff – now available in Stephen Gersh, *Reading Plato, Tracing Plato. From Ancient Commentary to Medieval Reception* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005).

23 On Calcidius, Macrobius, and the Hermetic *Asclepius* as textual-doctrinal sources of medieval Platonism, see Stephen Gersh, *Middle Platonism and Neoplatonism: The Latin Tradition* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986), pp. 329, n. 1, 421, n. 2, 493, n. 1, 779–807. On Calcidius, see further Paul Edward Dutton, "Medieval Approaches to Calcidius," in *Plato's*

given that the textual materials available were either isolated works or fragmentary testimonies and their authors either marginally Christian or non-Christian. Our heterogeneous group of other Platonists consists of Plato himself as a direct source of the tradition in his *Timaeus*, Plato himself as an indirect source via his declared or undeclared quotation in Latin writers like Calcidius and Macrobius, later Platonists as indirect sources of the tradition via their declared or undeclared quotation in Latin writers or works like Calcidius, Macrobius, the Hermetic *Asclepius*, and the Arabic-Latin *Book of Causes*, and later Platonists as direct sources in Calcidius' *Commentary on the Timaeus* or Proclus' *Elements of Theology* **[109]** as translated by William Moerbeke. I shall suggest that in the opinion of many medieval readers, this variegated textual corpus of uncertain authorial provenance and doctrinal consistency perfectly illustrates Augustine's conclusions regarding the inherent duplicity of the Platonic tradition.

Let us now briefly investigate the three layers of development in the evolution of medieval Platonism and some interferences between the levels, focusing on the pivotal role played by Dionysius the Areopagite.

At the foundational level of the Platonic structure, Augustine's analyses of the hermeneutical situation in two sets of passages are particularly important. In *On the City of God* VIII. 4, having briefly summarized Plato's achievement in completing philosophy by uniting the three branches of ethics, physics, and logic, Augustine comments that it would be risky to attempt to describe the Greek writer's thought in detail because he followed his teacher Socrates' practice of "concealing his own knowledge or opinion" (*dissimulanda scientia vel opinio*) with the result that "his views on important subjects cannot be discerned easily" (*de rebus magnis sententiae non facile perspici possunt*).[24] Undoubtedly, Augustine is here making a virtue out of a necessity since of Plato's actual writings he seems to have known the first section of the *Timaeus* in Cicero's translation together with some short quotations found in Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations* and Apuleius' *On the God of Socrates*.[25] Nevertheless, the idea that Plato pursued a strategy of concealment harmonizes with the thesis elaborated earlier by Augustine according to which the entire Academy was supposed to have advocated a similar policy, Thus in *Against the Academics* II. 10 and III. 7, he argues that the New Academy concealed its dogmatic positions – the dichotomies of intelligible and sensible, truth and image, knowledge and opinion – beneath a veil of skepticism, in order to avoid their contamination at the hands of Zeno of Citium, who was advocating the doctrine that **[110]** only corporeal things exist.[26] The historical interpretation

Timaeus *as Cultural Icon*, ed. Gretchen J. Reydams-Schils (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), pp. 183–205.

24 Augustine, *On the City of God* VIII. 4, CCSL 47, 219. 17–220. 38.

25 See Stephen Gersh, "The Medieval Legacy from Ancient Platonism," pp. 25–26.

26 Augustine, *Against the Academics* II. 10. 24, CCSL 29. 30. 48–31. 31; III. 7. 14–16, CCSL 29. 42. 1–44. 70; and III. 17. 37ff., CCSL 29. 57. 1ff. It is probable that Isidore of Seville's *Etymologies* – a standard textbook during the Middle Ages – played a role in transmitting this

outlined in these passages was not forgotten by medieval writers among whom Berthold of Moosburg particularly deserves to be mentioned. When introducing his voluminous *Exposition of Proclus' Elements of Theology* (written between 1327 and 1361), he summarizes the development of the later Platonic school by saying that Plotinus' contribution was to remove the veils which earlier thinkers like the Academics had placed over their doctrines, whereas Proclus' contribution was further to organize into a series of propositions those teachings which had now been unveiled.[27]

The second and third layers of development within the history of medieval Platonism – the writings attributed to Dionysius the Areopagite and the heterogeneous group of Platonic texts, respectively – need to be considered in conjunction with one another and at greater length. We must also proceed with the realization that the textual tradition of the *CA* itself is a complex phenomenon in which medieval writers react not only to the Latin and sometimes the Greek text of Dionysius himself but also to the continuous accumulation of glosses between the sixth and thirteenth centuries.

As is well known, the Dionysian textual tradition begins with John of Scythopolis (d. ca. 548). In John's important *Prologue* and *Scholia*, both the apostolic authorship and the Chalcedonian orthodoxy of Dionysius' writings were ably and successfully **[111]** defended.[28] Without going into the disputes about Christian dogma which provide the context for a full understanding of this material, we should simply make two observations relevant to the present topic. First, John's commentary often recasts Dionysius' teachings as being polemically directed against the pagan Greeks – a recasting in which concealed Neoplatonism is from time to time aimed against overt Neoplatonists[29] – and second, John's glosses downplay Dionysius' relation to Hierotheos in favor of his relation to the Apostle Paul. The *Prologue* to the *Scholia* also includes a probable interpolation into John's text containing some statements of crucial importance. Here, it is argued that various non-Christian philosophers, and especially Proclus, had copied

interpretation of Platonism. This author states that the Academics believed that all things are uncertain and "that there are many uncertain and concealed things which God wished to exceed human understanding" (*multa incerta et occulta esse, quae voluit Deus intelligentiam hominis excedere*) (*Etym*. VIII. 6. 11). Clearly, Isidore is combining the two historically distinct ideas of skepticism – as developed by the New Academy – and apophaticism – as developed in Middle Platonism and Neoplatonism.

27 Berthold of Moosburg, *Expositio super Elementationem Theologicam Procli*, eds. Maria Rita Pagnoni-Sturlese and Loris Sturlese, CPTMA VI. 1 (Hamburg: Meiner, 1984) 37. 10–29.

28 John of Scythopolis' Prologue and Scholia can be found (as edited by B. Corderius) in *Patrologia Graeca* 4. On this material see Paul Rorem and John C.Lamoreaux, *John of Scythopolis and the Dionysian Corpus. Annotating the Areopagite* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

29 John here makes a significant use of Plotinus as shown by Werner Beierwaltes and Richard Kannicht, "Plotin-Testimonia bei Johannes von Skythopolis," *Hermes* 96 (1968), pp. 247–251, Werner Beierwaltes, "Johannes von Skythopolis und Plotin," *Studia Patristica* 11/2 = *Texte und Untersuchungen* 108 (1972), pp. 3–7, and Richard M. Frank, "The Use of the *Enneads* by John of Scythopolis," *Le Muséon* 100 (1987), pp. 101–108.

certain concepts of the blessed Dionysius and that one can conjecture from this that the ancient Athenian philosophers had concealed his works in order to present themselves as the originators of his divine oracles, although now Dionysius' writings are re-emerging through the providence of God.[30] That Philoponus is the author of this interpolation has been argued by Beate Suchla and Paul Rorem on convincing grounds – including the facts that this Christian commentator was not only demonstrably an expert on the works of Iamblichus and Proclus but also quotes Dionysius on three occasions two of which relate to *Letter* 7's account of the eclipse at the crucifixion.[31] **[112]** Irrespective of the authorship question, this passage of the *Prologue* represents another example, and a potentially influential example, of the concealing-disclosing theory applied to the interpretation of the Platonic tradition.

The medieval development of the Dionysian textual tradition exhibits a number of interesting features. G. Théry, H.-F. Dondaine, and others have hypothesized that, after the glosses of John of Scythopolis had been combined with further glosses by Maximus the Confessor, both sets had been translated into Latin by Anastasius Bibliothecarius (in 875), and the entire collection began to be attributed indiscriminately to Maximus, it is possible to distinguish as the two main traditions of the *CA* until the twelfth century: a simpler version based on the Eriugenian Latin translation which is not accompanied by any glosses and a more elaborate version based on the same translation but now accompanied by the Maximian and pseudo-Maximian glosses. By the thirteenth century, the tradition of the *CA* has become stabilized in a very complex form. For example, in the important MS *BN lat*. 17341, we find I. the *Opus maius* consisting of 1. the *Compellit me* comprising the Eriugenian translation of *On the Celestial Hierarchy* and the scholia on that text by "Maximus" together with further commentaries by Eriugena, Hugh of St. Victor, and John the Saracen and 2. the *Opus alterum* comprising the Eriugenian translation of the remainder of the Dionysian corpus, the scholia on these texts by "Maximus" together with extracts from Eriugena's *Periphyseon* attributed to Maximus and certain other anonymous glosses; II. a new translation of the entire *CA* by John the Saracen; and III. a paraphrase of the Dionysian writings in the Saracen's translation by Thomas Gallus, abbot of Vercelli.[32]

[113] Iohannes Scottus Eriugena establishes both the religious authority and the Platonic affiliation of Dionysius in the fine preface attached to his translation of

30 John of Scythopolis, *Prologue*, PG 4, 21B-C.

31 See Beate Regina Suchla, "Die Überlieferung des Prologs des Johannes von Skythopolis zum griechischen Corpus Dionysiacum Areopagiticum," *Nachrichten der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen* I, Philol.-hist. Klasse 4 (1984), pp. 185–187, and Rorem and Lamoreaux, *John of Scythopolis and the Dionysian Corpus*, pp. 106–107.

32 See Hyacinthe-François Dondaine, *Le Corpus Dionysien de l'Université de Paris au XIIIe siècle* (Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura 1953). For the early versions of the *CA*, see pp. 23–34; for the "Anastasian" versions p. 35ff.; for the thirteenth-century *CA*, p. 67ff. Dondaine reviews the earlier conclusions of Gabriel Théry, *Études dionysiennes* I: *Hilduin, traducteur de Denys* and II: *Hilduin, traducteur de Denys. Édition de sa traduction* (Paris, 1932, 1937).

the *CA* and addressed to Charles the Bald. He writes that according to an impressive list of both ancient and modern authorities, the aforesaid Dionysius was a "student and aide" (*discipulus atque adiutor*) of the Apostle Paul, who consecrated him bishop of Athens, that he came to Rome in the time of Pope Clement the successor of the Apostle Peter, and that he was dispatched from there on an evangelical mission to Gaul, where he received a martyr's crown together with his comrades Rusticus and Eleutherius. After some interesting remarks on the difficulty of translating the text, Eriugena returns to biography. He adds that "the holy Dionysius was educated during the first flowering of his youth in the teachings of the Academy" (*sanctus ergo Dionysius primis iuventutis suae floribus Academiae studiis eruditus*), but then having been admonished by the miraculous vision of the eclipse at the time of the crucifixion which he shared with bishop Polycarp and others and also by the miraculous vision of the body of Christ after his resurrection which he shared with James, Peter, and Hierotheos – his most important teacher in theology after the apostles – he turned to the writing of the following works. It is of course noteworthy that by the time of Eriugena's writing, a second identification has compounded the pseudonymity of Dionysius. According to the interpretation codified definitively in Hilduin's *History of Saint Dionysius* (ca. 835–40) written to introduce the latter's pre-Eriugenian translation of the *CA*, the fifth-century follower of Neoplatonism was not only Dionysius the Areopagite but also Dionysius of Francia.[33]

The doctrine of this converted Platonist forms the starting point for Eriugena's own treatise *Periphyseon*, many sections of which can be treated as virtual commentaries on the *CA*. To cite perhaps the finest example, the opening section of book III contains arguably the most extended statement of the *processive* **[114]** aspect of the Dionysian system: the primary subject-matter of *On Divine Names*.[34] Here, in relation to the central hermeneutic horizon of "knowledge," the reader is conducted through a dialectical alternation between denial of various divine names where God remains unknowable under these names and assertion of the same names where God becomes knowable under those names, this representing a metaphysical alternation between – from the objective or macrocosmic viewpoint – the First Cause's transcendence and immanence with respect to its effects and – from the complementary subjective or microcosmic viewpoint – the multiple effects' remaining and procession in relation to their cause. But Eriugena also philosophically expands the fundamentally Dionysian statement above. He enumerates the divine names according to the selection presented and the order of presentation in Dionysius' treatise, although the incompleteness of the selection and the circularity of the order are held to show the contemplator's active intervention in the process of unfolding. Follow-

33 On the identification of the apostolic Dionysius and Dionysius of Francia see Luscombe, "Denis the Pseudo-Areopagite in the Middle Ages," pp. 135–140.

34 Eriugena, *Periphyseon* III. 619A–630A in *Iohannis Scotti seu Eriugenae Periphyseon*, ed. É Jeauneau, CCCM 163 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999).

ing Dionysius, the enumeration begins with the name Good and ends with the name Unity. Contrary to Dionysius, divine names associated with "knowledge" – the names Reason, Intelligence, Wisdom, Mind – are assigned much greater prominence, and divine names originally drawn from Plato's *Parmenides* – the names Same, Different, Similar, Dissimilar – are reduced somewhat in prominence. The former change reflects the primacy of the hermeneutic standpoint of "knowledge" mentioned earlier, the latter the absorption of such obviously logical functions by the fourfold dialectical schema treated especially in books I and II.

If Eriugena's *Periphyseon* exploits a Dionysian Platonism whose function is non-enigmatic – although the object of study is certainly an enigmatic God – his earlier *Annotations on Martianus* introduce a heterogeneous Platonism whose role is more enigmatic. Since this material has not been studied in the manner to be proposed here, we should present the relevant passages more fully.

[115] Considering the versions in the Paris and Oxford MSS of these *Annotations* together, we find various glosses indicative of Eriugena's conception of Platonism attached to four passages in Martianus Capella's *On the Marriage of Philology and Mercury*.[35] These are the narrative of Psyche and her familial and social relations (I. 7), a first explanation of the harmony of spheres (I. 12–15), a second explanation of the harmony of spheres (I. 27–30), and a reference to the "Once and Twice Beyond" powers approached through Plato's mysteries (II. 205).[36] Although these glosses added together do not produce a large body of text, a surprisingly complete picture of pagan Platonism emerges nevertheless. Indeed, Eriugena shows considerable diligence in citing those authors whom he has consulted for his commentary. Thus, Plato is mentioned by name and his work *Timaeus* is cited,[37] likewise Calcidius who is introduced as a Platonist and explicitly mentioned as the author of a commentary on the *Timaeus*,[38] Macrobius who is also classified as a Platonist and alluded to as the author of a commentary on the *Dream of Scipio*,[39] and Martianus Capella himself who is described as a Platonist.[40] Among earlier writers, Varro – whom Augustine had also probably assumed to be a Platonist – is cited via Augustine's *On the City of God*,[41] there being also some generic references to Platonists and to pagans.[42]

35 *Iohannis Scotti Annotationes in Marcianum*, ed. Cora E. Lutz (Cambridge, MA: Medieval Academy of America, 1939) = edition of MS. Paris B.N.lat. 12960 ("Paris Version," henceforth "P") and Édouard Jeauneau, *Quatre Thèmes Érigéniens, Conférence Albert-le-Grand 1974* (Montréal: Institut d'Études Médiévales Albert-le-Grand and Paris: J. Vrin, 1978), pp. 91–166 = edition of MS. Oxford, Bodl. Auct. T. 2. 19 ("Oxford Version," henceforth "O").

36 *Martianus Capella*, ed. James Willis (Leipzig: Teubner, 1983).

37 *P* 10. 16–22, 22. 25–8; *O* 122, 21–4.

38 *P* 10. 16–17, 22. 26–7.

39 *P* 22. 4–7. At *O* 121. 13–16 Eriugena actually cites Cicero's *Dream of Scipio* but probably read the latter in conjunction with the Macrobian commentary cited elsewhere.

40 *P* 10. 22–4, 10. 33–5, 22. 13–19.

41 *O* 147. 18ff., 149. 15–23. The Augustinian passages are *On the City of God* VII. 2, CCSL 47, 185. 30–186.30 and VII. 5, CCSL 47, 190. 1–191. 51. Cf. *P* 38. 2–4.

42 *P* 10. 22, 11. 3–4; *O* 130. 3.

[116] The Eriugenian glosses on Martianus describe Platonic teachings inasmuch as the latter are different from or opposed to Christianity. Here, it is possible to distinguish what we would call Neoplatonic material: for example, a structure of three hypostases called "Wisdom," "Intelligence," and "Soul," further references to the first hypostasis as "Unity"; to the second hypostasis as "Nous," "the intellectual world," and "the intellectual Jupiter"; and to the third hypostasis as "Entelechia." Consistent with this is the identification of the second hypostasis with an "Idea" (*idea*) which represents the form of all things or contains all things both general and specific.[43] Eriugena's philosophical annotations apply not only to the macrocosm but also to the microcosm. Here, we find further typically Neoplatonic materials dealing with the individual souls' descent from a disembodied state, their transmigration from body to body in accordance with the system of rewards and punishments, and their return to the state of disembodiment, and also discussion of the astronomical context in which the individual souls derive from the universal soul through the intermediate agency of the sun, enter into the physical world through a portal **[117]** near the zodiac sign of Leo, and acquire some psychological characteristic from each planetary circle in descending to earth.[44] At one point in the glosses, Eriugena notes how Martianus' argument shifts from describing the visible world to describing the intellectual world, the former phase being interpreted in terms of Varro's theology as reported by Augustine and the latter phase using some of the Neoplatonic material discussed above.[45] This proves that the glossator clearly understood the ontological basis of Augustine's distinction between the Stoic-Platonic doctrine of Varro on the one hand – illustrated by the latter's teaching that God represents the soul and body of the totality as man represents the soul and body of the individual although God is primarily named "world soul" from his superior part and man is primarily named "soul" from his exercise of wisdom[46] – and the Neoplatonic doctrine of Plotinus and his followers

43 The relevant texts are as follows: *P* 10. 16–22 Entelechia *ut Calcidius in expositione* Timei *Platonis exponit perfecta aetas interpretatur. Aetas quippe adulta* hēlikia *a Grecis dicitur. Entelechia vero quasi* entos hēlikia, *hoc est intima aetas. Generalem quippe mundi animam Entelechiam Plato nominat, ex qua speciales animae sive rationabiles sint sive racione carentes in singulas mundani corporis partes sole administrante, vel potius procreante, procedunt ut Platonici perhibent*; *O* 110. 7–11 *'Endelechia' vocatur perfecta aetas, eliche aetas generalis. Ideo autem dicitur anima esse filia Solis, quae gr(ece) vocatur* nus, *quia dum anima ad perfectam aetatem pervenerit endelechia vocatur. Perfecta igitur anima a claritate scientiae dicitur; O* 113. 1–3 *Per* speculum *significatur origo animae, ut sciat qua origine est creata, id est a sapientia ad intelligentiam et postea ad animam.; O* 153. 19–24 Ipse Pallas texuerat. *Descriptio totius mundi Iovis dupliciter intelligitur. Est intellectualis Iovis, et est sensibilis. Primum describit sensibilem, deinde spiritualem. Describit igitur Iovem sicut hominem sapientem cuius capud coronatum significat extremam spheram adiunctam variis sideribus.; O* 157. 3–8 Decenter ornati. *Postquam ex visibilibus creaturis erant ornati, tunc etiam formam omnium rerum, quae idea dicitur, in conspectu habebant. Visibilem mundum hucusque describit, quem nominavit Iovem. Intellectualem vero mundum, quia aeternus vocatur, nunc describit*.

44 See *P* 10. 16–24, 21. 32–23.6; *O* 110. 7–11, 113.1–3, 121. 12–122. 28, 130.3–132.23.

45 *O* 157. 3–8.

46 *O* 149. 15–23, 156. 12–21.

on the other. Eriugena actually continues at some length with Varro's teaching, explaining how it rationalizes mythology by identifying Jupiter with the aether, Juno with the air, Diana with the earth, and Orcus with the underworld.[47]

Although the Eriugenian glosses on Martianus are mostly critical of the Platonic material presented – in particular, he refers to the "poetical ravings" (*poetica deliramenta*) of the doctrine of transmigration[48] – there are several passages in which a positive message is discerned. For example, Eriugena suggests that the *hapax kai dis epekeina* ("Once and Twice Beyond") mentioned by Martianus in connection with Plato could be understood in such a manner that the "Once" refers to the Father, the "Twice" to the Son's duality as God and as Word, and the "Beyond" to the consubstantiality of the Persons.[49] This obviously represents a tentative explanation of the first and second Neoplatonic hypostases in **[118]** their macrocosmic form as an intimation of the Christian Trinity. Elsewhere, Eriugena indicates that the *an(o)ia* ("non-intelligence") mentioned by Martianus in connection with divination might be understood via the "-privative as a negative of *nous* ("intelligence") in the special sense not of a privation but of an intensification.[50] This may perhaps be interpreted as an explanation of the phenomenon concerned simultaneously in terms of the first and second Neoplatonic hypostases and in terms of the Dionysian negative and affirmative theologies in their microcosmic form.

We shall continue our discussion of the second and third layers of development within the history of medieval Platonism – the writings attributed to Dionysius the Areopagite and the heterogeneous group of Platonic texts, respectively – by turning to the most noteworthy representative of this tradition during the early twelfth century: Thierry of Chartres.[51] As already noted, our narrative must now become more complicated because of the gradual but substantial augmentation of textual material during this period. By the second half of the twelfth century, one can point to new Latin translations of important Greek theological works such as John Damascene's *On the Orthodox Faith* (by Burgundio of Pisa), to the composition of the earliest post-Eriugenian commentaries on Dionysius' *Celestial Hierarchy* by Hugh of St. Victor and John the Saracen – although the first questions regarding Dionysius' pseudonymity had also been raised (by Peter Abailard)[52] – , and to new translations of Plato's dialogues *Meno* and *Phaedo* by Aristippus of Catania. Since he died shortly after the middle of the century, Thierry was perhaps unable to benefit from some of these advances. Nevertheless, there is detectable in his work a methodology for dealing with Platonic materials which is radically differ-

47 *O* 149. 15ff.

48 See *P* 21. 32–33.

49 *P* 73. 25–30.

50 *O* 112, 17–20.

51 The possibility of turning down another avenue by studying the Victorines and Thomas Gallus will be deferred to another occasion.

52 See Luscombe, "Denis the Pseudo-Areopagite in the Middle Ages," pp. 147–148. The writer shows that Abelard's position was by no means one of total rejection.

ent from any practiced hitherto. This methodology involves the **[119]** elaboration of a general hermeneutic of Platonism in which the latter's enigmatic quality is mitigated first, by assigning certain Middle and Neoplatonic writings definitely to the Christian camp – for example, Calcidius' *Commentary on the Timaeus* could be accepted on the grounds of its occasional Judaeo-Christian allusions and the Hermetic *Asclepius* on the basis of some favorable patristic judgments – and second, by handling more resolutely pagan works like Macrobius' *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio* or Martianus Capella's *On the Marriage of Philology and Mercury* with grammatical techniques – for instance, by restricting their application to an epistemological sphere inferior to that of theology, or by permitting their application beyond this restricted epistemological sphere in an exclusively allegorical sense. Thierry's methodology also depends on the direction of specific hermeneutical attention towards Boethius. This late ancient philosopher operates as a kind of free radical with respect to the layers of development in the history of medieval Platonism distinguished earlier. On the one hand, Boethius was the expert in arithmetic and music who could be utilized as a textual authority in the context of Macrobius or Martianus (the highest layer of our analysis). On the other hand, Boethius was the writer of theological treatises who could be appealed to as a doctrinal authority in the company of Augustine (the lowest layer of our analysis). As a third possibility – and with special relevance to the present discussion – Boethius could be understood as glossing Dionysius and Dionysius understood as glossing Boethius. Moreover, the hermeneutical utility of this writer extends into other areas: for example, the legitimation of the harmony of Plato and Aristotle and of Aristotelian logic itself.

Boethius' famous work *On the Consolation of Philosophy*, because of the peculiar nature of its literary genre, actually bridges the gap between mathematics and theology. Even more important, it suggests a certain reading of the history of Platonism.[53] **[120]** The first three proses of book I describe the figure of Philosophy as she appears to the disconsolate prisoner Boethius in such a manner that one can discern a contrast between what is unknown in pr. 1 – the as yet unrecognized female figure – and what is known in pr. 3 – the figure subsequently recognized as Philosophy – , pr. 2 signaling the beginning of knowledge with a meaningful gesture on the lady's part.[54] In pr. 1 the author refers to the figure's ambiguously

53 In the interpretation of Philosophy and of her garment which follows, we shall confine ourselves to reporting Boethius' own explanations. However, one should note that the garment itself is an extremely complex figure whose traditional meanings include – beyond those stated in the present context by Boethius – the idea of *concealment*. On this basis, the interpretation of Philosophy and of her garment would continue the association between Platonism and concealment suggested by Augustine. See above pp. 109–110.

54 The first three proses of book I are structurally parallel to the last three proses of book III, these sets forming the beginning and end respectively of the main Platonic argument of *On the Consolation of Philosophy* (books IV and V having the nature of detailed corollaries to the main argument). The structural parallelism resides especially in the fact that both Philosophy in book

determined stature, and to her garment which is woven of fine threads, has had small pieces violently removed from it and bears a design containing the letters Θ and Π.[55] Now this female figure is not only identified with Philosophy but also associated with "my Plato" (*noster Plato*), Plato's teacher Socrates, and Socrates' "legacy" (*hereditas*).[56] Therefore, the author's reference to her ambiguous stature could be interpreted as symbolizing the uncertain provenance of Platonic teachings, and his references to her garment's weave, tearing, and embroidery the Platonic tradition's subtle interconnection of doctrines, its fragmentation in the process of transmission, and its enigmatic modes of codification, respectively.[57] **[121]** That Thierry of Chartres read the beginning of *On the Consolation of Philosophy* in this manner cannot be proven with certainty. However, such an interpretation would have been both natural and convenient for him.

Since we are following the Dionysian trajectory in the present instance, a full discussion of the only treatise explicitly declared to be Thierry's by a contemporary witness – the *Treatise on the Works of the Six Days* – will not be necessary. We shall simply observe that Plato's *Timaeus* is introduced there and handled with a grammatical technique whereby its application is restricted to physics and that Boethius is studied in his capacity of mathematical rather than theological authority and handled with a grammatical method whereby, in conjunction with Macrobius and Martianus Capella, his arithmetical and geometrical doctrine is extended by transference to theology.[58] Certain other treatises associated with Thierry's name should, however, be examined with more attention to detail.

Thierry of Chartres is the author of at least three major commentaries on Boethius' treatise *On the Trinity* which have come down to us anonymously, his authorship being established by doctrinal parallels between the three works and the *Treatise on the Works of the Six Days* which is reliably assigned to him and between the three works themselves.[59] The first of these commentaries is a fairly close reading of Boethius' text (called the "Commentary" by its editor Nikolaus

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I and blessedness in book III represent metaphysical unities which have become pluralized by man's ignorance and folly.

55 The author refers to one further aspect of the garment in pr. 2: the fold which is used by Philosophy to dry the eyes of the prisoner Boethius (*CP* I, pr. 2, 15). This drying of eyes is the structural element which connects proses 1 and 3 by mediating between the weeping mentioned in pr. 1 (I, pr. 1, 2) and the laughter mentioned in pr. 3 (I, pr. 3, 46).

56 Boethius, *CP* I, pr. 3, 17–30. One should also note here the reference to "traces" (*vestigia*) of Platonism.

57 These Greek letters are ambiguous in meaning. On one level, they are the initial letters of the words *theōria* and *praxis* – the two parts of Platonic-Aristotelian philosophy; on another level, they correspond to the Arabic numerals 9 and 80. However, the most important aspect may be neither the former nor the latter reading but the semantic interplay between these readings (and others) as such.

58 Thierry of Chartres, *Tractatus de sex dierum operibus* 30, 568. 81ff. in *Commentaries on Boethius by Thierry of Chartres and his School*, ed. Nikolaus M. Häring (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1971).

59 The explanations in this paragraph follow Häring, *Commentaries on Boethius*, introduction, pp. 19–52.

Häring), the second is a more digressive reading (Häring's "Gloss"), while the third is indicated by its style to be a report of lectures delivered (Häring's "Lectures"). **[122]** Also seemingly by Thierry is a substantial précis of a lecture course covering not only Boethius' *On the Trinity* but also his other theological treatises *On the Hebdomads* and *Against Eutyches and Nestorius* (called the "Munich Abridgement" by Häring), the doctrinal connection between this text and the "Lectures" on the one hand and two further fragments of commentary on *On the Hebdomads* (Häring's "London Fragment") and on *Against Eutyches and Nestorius* (Häring's "Admont Fragment") on the other suggesting that the "Lectures" originally extended to all Boethius' theological treatises. That the Thierrian commentaries on Boethius have come down to us anonymously is a consequence of the early twelfth-century pedagogical practice of publishing such works without written authorial attribution.[60] It is generally assumed that this practice resulted from a desire to place the glossing text in a hermeneutically inferior position with respect to the glossed text – whose author was of course named[61] – although it is also possible that the practice reflects a willingness to allow the glossing text to assume a hermeneutically superior position with respect to the glossed text just a little. In fact, the anonymities of inferiority and superiority in commentary are neither inconsistent with one another nor without a relation to the un-naming of matter and God in metaphysics.[62]

[123] In Thierry's writings about Boethius, the dialectical alternation between denial of various divine names where God remains unknowable under these names, and assertion of the same names where God becomes knowable under those names – which is also the metaphysical alternation between the First Cause's transcendence and immanence with respect to its effects or between the multiple effects' remaining and procession in relation to their cause – is as prominent as it is in Eriugena. In fact, the twelfth-century writer inserts this typically Dionysian conceptual structure into his glosses on the Boethian treatises on about twelve occasions, in most cases explicitly citing as its source "the *Hierarchy* of blessed Dionysius" (*Ierarchia beati Dionysii*) by which he means the Latin translation of

60 The anonymity of the important set of twelfth-century glosses on Plato's *Timaeus* (which have been attributed, with some probability, to Bernard of Chartres) furnishes the most striking parallel illustration of this process.

61 This explanation of anonymity is favored by Nikolaus M. Häring, "Commentary and Hermeneutics," in *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century*, eds. Robert L. Benson and Giles Constable (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), pp. 174–180. The situation of hermeneutic inferiority is often reflected graphically in the manuscripts themselves by the contrast between the large lettering of the glossed text and the cramped interlinear and marginal annotations. Cf. *The* Glosae super Platonem *of Bernard of Chartres*, ed. Paul Edward Dutton (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1991), introduction, pp. 9–10.

62 The subtle combination of hermeneutical inferiority and superiority is captured in Bernard of Chartres' famous metaphor of the moderns as dwarfs seated on the shoulders of the giants of antiquity (see John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon* 3. 4, 136. ed. C.C. J. Webb).

the *Celestial Hierarchy* and perhaps also Hugh of St. Victor's commentary.[63] Nevertheless, **[124]** numerous innovations are made with respect to the Eriugenian version of the theory. Some of Thierry's changes represent philosophical precisions of a general nature concerning the logical structure of the affirmative names: for example, where he argues that those ideas which can only be applied to God by transference include the actual formation of propositions by joining subjects and predicates[64] – an argument which implies that the entire axiomatic structure of Boethius' *De Hebdomadibus* is an affirmative theology requiring a negative correction and gives an added meaning to the obscure brevity concealing the "secret

63 Dionysius, *On the Celestial Hierarchy* 2, 140C-141A. Cf. Hugh of St. Victor, *Commentary on the Celestial Hierarchy*, PL 175, 971C ff. The citations of this Dionysian passage in Thierry's writings are i. *Lectures on On the Trinity* (henceforth *LT*) 4. 28, 195. 34–196. 3 *Quod autem deus non sit ens aperte dicit Dionisius in* Ierarchia *dicens quod deus potius accedit ad nichil quam ad aliquid. Ad nichil i.e. ad nullum ens accedit quia non est ens sed est entitas vel essentia omnium rerum a quo entia fluunt et habent esse*; ii. *London Fragment of Against Eutyches and Nestorius* (henceforth *LFAEN*) 3. 63, 246. 63–7 *Quod ostendit et exequitur Dionisius summus theologus in* Girathia *ubi theologiam per affirmationem exequitur dicens quod deus est sapientia virtus prudentia iusticia fortitudo. Quae omnia de deo affirmat et ei conveniant per translationem: non proprie. Ipse enim ut diximus nullo intellectu conprehendi nullo vocabulo significari potest*; iii. *Gloss on On the Trinity* (henceforth *GT*) 4. 13, 287. 99–2 *Hinc est autem id quod in* Ierarchia *beati Dyonisii invenitur quod cum deum intelligimus magis intellectus noster accedit ad nichilum quam ad aliquid*.; iv. *Treatise on On the Trinity* (henceforth *TT*) 26, 309. 23–6 *Theologia vero duplex est: alia affirmationis alia negationis. Sed theologia negationis omnia vocabula a deo plane abnegat. Unde beatus Dionisius utens theologia per negationem in* Hierarchia *inquit: Deus nec vita est nec virtus nec spiritus nec sapientia.;* v. *Munich Abridgement of On the Hebdomads* (henceforth *MAH*) 34, 411. 1–3 *Unde Dyonisius in* Gearchia *summus theologus dicit quod magis accedit ad nichil quam ad aliquid scilicet non est ens quoniam nullo participat*.; vi. *Munich Abridgement of Against Eutyches and Nestorius* (henceforth *MAAEN*) 1. 27, 445. 4–6 *Ens enim est quod entitate participat. Et quia per privationem entis intelligitur deus idcirco Dyonisius in* Gearchia *dicit quod potius accedit ad nichil quam ad aliquid quia non est ens sed entitas ipsa*.; vii. *ibid.* 3. 63, 465. 18–22 *Quod ostendit Dyonisius summus ille theologus in* Gearchia *ubi theologiam exeqitur per affirmationem dicens: deus est sapientia virtus prudentia. Quae omnia de deo affirmat. Deinde in theologia per negationem dicit quod deus nec sapientia nec virtus nec prudentia est. Et ita de aliis. Quippe nullum istorum deo proprie convenit;* viii. *Victorine Commentary on On the Trinity* (henceforth *VCT*) 99, 501. 66–502. 2 *Theologia autem alia est affirmationis alia negationis sicut beatus Dionisius utendo utraque bene declarat: Theologia affirmationis est per quam affirmamus de deo quae digne possunt dici de deo ut cum dicimus: deus est vita deus est veritas et cetera huiusmodi*; ix. *ibid*.102, 502. 82–4 *Theologia negationis est quod per omnia rerum vocabula de deo negamus sicut facit beatus Dionisius in* Ierarchia *dicens: Deus non est veritas non est sapientia non est virtus*; x. *ibid.* 106, 503. 8–12 *Dum igitur negavit Dionisius a deo praedictam vocabulorum proprietatem statuumque discretionem attendens ergo cum dicitur: deus est iustitia vel iustus vel veritas et cetera quae de deo digne dici possunt nulla fit statuum discretio nec praedicatur qualitas vel quantitas sed substantia supra substantiam i.e. yperusia ut idem Boetius est dicturus*; xi. *ibid.* 107, 503. 13–18 *Nulli enim status in deo sunt quibus discerni possit ab aliis rebus si aliis dicere possim. Neque intelligi potest. Unde Basilius* Super Ierarchiam *ubi dicit deus non est vita: dum deum inquit intelligo intellectus potius accedit ad nichilum quam ad aliquid i.e. ad remotionem omnium quasi diceret: considerans deum potius intelligo quid non sit quam quid sit. Nec tamen dixit ad nichilum sed potius ad nichil*.

64 *LT* 4. 29, 195. 34–196. 41. Cf. *ibid*. 4. 12, 190. 33–9; *GT* 4. 9, 286. 59–63; *ibid.* 4. 11, 286. 74–12. 287. 90.

doctrine" (*arcanum*) of that work from the unworthy.[65] Other changes represent conceptual precisions of a general nature concerning the epistemological status of the affirmative names: for instance, where he argues that the items which can only be applied to God **[125]** by transference can be divided into words – which are conventional – , understandings – which are natural – , and the motion of reason joining the two.[66] In connection with the logical precision added to Dionysius' teaching, Thierry states that the correction of affirmative theology by the negative aspect means that predicating and subjecting are "by similitude only" (*in sola similitudine*) with respect to God;[67] in connection with the epistemological precision added to the same doctrine, he states that the correction of affirmative theology by the negative aspect means that we must use "bendings of words and understandings" (*flexiones nominum . . . intellectuum*), changes of meaning knowable only to God or select men, and "intimation" (*subintellectus*) rather than normal understanding.[68] It should be noted that Thierry further modifies Dionysius' teaching concerning affirmative names by emphasizing that such names must always represent properties worthy of the divinity.[69]

Thierry also innovates with respect to the Dionysian-Eriugenian understanding of negative and affirmative methods by drawing philosophical conclusions from a staged confrontation of *On the Celestial Hierarchy* 2 and other selected texts.

1 A new *theological* doctrine emerges from the intertextual reading of the Dionysian passage and Calcidius' *Commentary on the Timaeus* 172, 276. 15–277. 8. In commenting on Boethius' discussion of the identity in diversity of the godhead in *On the Trinity* 1, the fragmentary commentary on that text called the "Victorine Commentary" by Häring and assigned to an unknown student of Thierry introduces the distinction between affirmative and negative theology by noting that the philosopher Parmenides had described the affirmative method by saying that "God is the one for whom being whatever he is is being everything that he is" **[126]** (*deus . . . est cui quodlibet esse quod est est esse omne id quod est*).[70] Although the actual wording seems to occur for the first time here, the reference to "Parmenides" can be traced back to the quotation of Plato's *Parmenides* in Calcidius' *Commentary on the Timaeus* which is introduced by both the purely Thierrian "Gloss" on *On the Trinity* and the purely Thierrian "Lectures" on *On the Trinity* in order to explain the Boethian teaching in *On the Trinity* 2 that God is both a single Form and a plurality of

65 *MAH* 12, 407. 65–13, 407. 76.

66 *GT* 4. 7, 285. 44–8. 286, 58. Cf. *LT* 4. 11, 190. 31–2; *GT* 4. 15, 287. 13–17; *LFAEN* 3. 63. 246. 65–7; *MAAEN* 1. 30, 445. 16–19; *VCT* 1. 103, 502. 92–95.

67 *MAAEN* 3. 53, 464. 69–71.

68 *GT* 4. 15, 287. 13–17; *MAAEN* 1. 29, 445. 11–1. 30, 445. 21. Cf. *GT* 4. 8, 286, 52–8; *LFAEN* 3. 47, 244. 79–82.

69 *VCT* 99, 501. 66–502.2; *ibid.* 106, 503. 8–12.

70 *VCT* 99, 502. 70–72.

Forms.[71] Philosophically speaking, the doctrine elaborated in these glosses is that affirmative theology states that each property of the godhead is coextensive with the godhead as a whole – whether this property be "fatherhood" or "sonship" in the case of the Trinity or "life" or "power" in that of the Form of Forms – whereas negative theology states that each property of the godhead is demarcated from that of "godhead" itself or from each other property. This explanation and illustration can be found in another fragmentary commentary on Boethius' *On the Trinity* called the "Treatise" by Häring and assigned to an unknown student of Thierry and also in the "Victorine Commentary" mentioned earlier, in both cases being associated via further intertextual glosses with Hilary of Poitiers' *On the Trinity*.[72] According to this latter parallel, affirmative theology itself is founded on the divine property of "eternity" while negative theology itself is founded on the divine property of "infinity." Now it is perhaps already apparent that the discussion in all these glosses assumes the *differential* logical function of negation i.e. the function whereby, for any negative "non-x," the corresponding affirmative could be "x," "y," or any other term. Given this interpretation of negation, it is not surprising that Thierry or his student should find Hilary of Poitiers' notion that negative theology itself is founded on the divine property of "infinity" to be the decisive contribution to the debate.

2 **[127]** Intertextual reading of *Celestial Hierarchy* 2 and three texts – Calcidius' *Commentary on the Timaeus* 172, 276.15–277.8, Boethius' *On the Hebdomads* 28–30 (= axiom 2), and ps.-Hermes Trismegistus: *Asclepius* 20, 320.15–321. 9 – produces a new *cosmological* doctrine. This represents Thierry's version of the metaphysical alternation between the First Cause's transcendence and immanence with respect to its effects or between the multiple effects' remaining and procession in relation to their cause exploited by Eriugena. It should be noted that in both the ninth and the twelfth-century versions of the theory, the plurality of the Platonic Forms is itself constituted by the dynamic relation between the creator and the created, and that this dynamic relation is in its turn partially dependent on human thinking

The intertextual construction of the Thierrian cosmology may be analyzed in terms of three structures: *a*. Dionysius and Calcidius. Here, the unfolding of the divinity as cosmos consists, according to the "Lectures" on *On the Trinity*, of an alternation between the "one exemplar" (*unum exemplar*) and the "many exemplars" in the divine mind or, according to the "Gloss" on *On the Trinity*, of an alternation between the "Form of Forms" (*forma formarum*) and the "many Forms."[73] Both passages are commenting upon Boethius' *On the Trinity* 2 by

71 *GT* 2. 35, 276. 34–7; *LT* 2. 66, 176. 45–50.
72 *TT* 26, 309. 23–34; *VCT* 110. 503, 28–112, 504. 48. Cf. *ibid.* 501. 66–502. 2.
73 *LT* 2. 66, 176. 45–50; *GT* 2. 35, 276. 31–7.

specifically citing Plato's *Parmenides* via Calcidius' report. *b*. Dionysius and Boethius. According to the "Munich Abridgement" of Thierry's lectures on Boethius' *On the Hebdomads*, the unfolding of the divinity as cosmos comprises an alternation of "being (to be)" (*esse*) and a plurality of which each item is "a being" (*id quod est*) – these terms being Boethian and drawn from *On the Hebdomads*.[74] According to the "Lectures" on *On the Trinity* and also the "Munich Abridgement" of the lectures on *On the Hebdomads*, the divine-cosmic development consists of an alternation between "enfolding" (*complicare*) and "unfolding" (*explicatio*) – these terms being Boethian but drawn from *On the Consolation* **[128]** *of Philosophy*.[75] According to the "Lectures" on *On the Trinity*, the "Gloss" on *On the Trinity*, the "Munich Abridgement" of Thierry's lectures on Boethius' *On the Hebdomads*, and the "Munich Abridgement" of Thierry's lectures on Boethius' *Against Eutyches and Nestorius*, the unfolding of the divinity as cosmos comprises an alternation of "being (-ness)" (*entitas*) and a plurality of which each item is "(a) being" (*ens*) – these terms being originally devised by Thierry of Chartres himself.[76] *c*. Dionysius and ps.-Hermes. Here, the unfolding of the divinity as cosmos consists, according to the "Lectures" on *On the Trinity*, the "London Fragment" of Thierry's lectures on *Against Eutyches and Nestorius*, and the "Gloss" on *On the Trinity*, of an alternation between having "no name" (*nullum nomen*) and having "every name".[77] The first and second texts follow the *Asclepius* very closely in casting the metaphysical alternation in an argumentative form where God has no name or rather – since one must call all things by his name or him by the names of all things – God has every name. The third text departs from the *Asclepius* by specifying as the kind of names which can be inserted into the metaphysical alternation the following: Activity, Form, Being, Unity, the Supreme Good, and the Supreme Blessedness

3 A new *theological and cosmological* doctrine emerges from the intertextual reading of the Dionysian passage and Calcidius' *Commentary on the Timaeus* 319, 314.19–315.1. In commenting on Boethius' discussions of the manner of applying the categories to God in *On the Trinity* 4, the "Gloss" on *On the Trinity* introduces the above passage of Calcidius.[78] In commenting on Boethius' discussion of the necessity of grasping God and Matter by abstraction in *Against Eutyches and Nestorius* 1, both the "London Fragment" and the "Munich Abridgement" of Thierry's **[129]** lectures on *Against Eutyches and Nestorius* exploit the same Calcidian passage.[79] The passage concerned

74 *MAH* 22, 409. 28–34, 411. 8.
75 *LT* 4. 11, 189. 24–190. 3; *MAH* 33, 411. 95–9.
76 *LT* 4. 28, 195. 32–196. 3; *GT* 4. 14, 287. 3–6; *MAH* 34, 411. 1–7; *MAAEN* 1. 27, 445. 4–6.
77 *LT* 4. 11, 189. 22–190. 32; *LFAEN* 3, 45, 243. 69–3. 46, 244, 78; *GT* 2. 31, 275. 7–10.
78 *GT* 4. 14, 287. 10–12.
79 *LFAEN* 3. 44, 243. 64–7; *MAAEN* 1. 28, 445. 7–1. 30, 445. 21.

explains that since matter is formless and qualitiless – it appears to have substance, quality, quantity, relation, and other categories through the forms entering into it – it cannot be grasped by understanding. By inserting it into his glosses in the manner described, Thierry is able to realize a complicated yet productive textual strategy: namely, to make the Calcidian passage reinforce the teaching of *Against Eutyches and Nestorius* regarding the application of the same method of abstraction to both Matter and God by opposing its own doctrine regarding the application of the categories to Matter with that of *On the Trinity* concerning the application of the categories to God and also to make the Calcidian passage connect the essentially semantic approach with respect to the categories in *On the Trinity* with the primarily epistemological approach with respect to abstraction in *Against Eutyches and Nestorius*. It is important to note that the discussion in these glosses develops the Dionysian teaching about the affirmative and negative theologies by assuming the *privative* logical function of negation: i.e. the function whereby, for any negative "not-x" the corresponding affirmative must be "x." The use of negation here must therefore be contrasted with the use described in paragraph 1.

We have been making a brief foray into some of the less well-explored areas of the medieval Platonic tradition and especially of the pseudo-Dionysian Platonic tradition without implying that the narrative could not be extended to cover later writers also: for example, Nicholas of Cusa. The starting point of our investigation was the paradox that the Platonism of Dionysius remains an enigma for the modern reader, whereas for the medieval reader, Dionysius is the non-enigmatic element within an otherwise enigmatic notion of Platonism. The result of the investigation has perhaps been a greater understanding of the manner in which the enigmatic element which predominates within the non-Dionysian Platonism is gradually mitigated or at least somewhat **[130]** reconfigured within the historical development between Eriugena and Thierry of Chartres. Yet there is another curious aspect of this history of Platonism which has begun to emerge. This is the fact that the work of Eriugena as reader of concealed and enigmatic doctrine within the Platonic tradition itself becomes concealed and enigmatic when his glosses on Dionysius become absorbed into the corpus of anonymous texts. Similarly, the work of Thierry of Chartres as reader of concealed and enigmatic doctrine within the Platonic tradition itself becomes concealed and enigmatic when his glosses on Boethius become absorbed into the same corpus of anonymous texts. Of course, since anonymity was rampant in the medieval literary tradition, one should not read too much into mere historical accident. Moreover, there is obviously some difference between authors who conceal doctrine and doctrines whose authors are unknown. Nevertheless, one wonders whether the many superimposed veils of obscurity have played a special role in relation to the Platonic transmission. Throughout the patristic and medieval periods, the greatest intellectual problem was that of reconciling pagan philosophical thinking with Christian

religious dogma. That the hermeneutical combination of affirmation and negation with primacy accorded to the affirmative has always played a central role in the establishment of the necessary doctrinal synthesis is well known. This procedure is called "allegory." It is less well known that the hermeneutical combination of affirmative and negative with primacy accorded to the negation has also made its peculiar contribution to the establishment of the same synthesis.

6

DIONYSIUS' *ON DIVINE NAMES* AND PROCLUS' *PLATONIC THEOLOGY*

[77] It has been known since at least the end of the nineteenth century that the pseudonymous "Dionysius the Areopagite" who exercised so much influence on medieval Greek, Latin, and Arabic thought was significantly influenced by the philosophical thinking of the fifth-century Athenian School of Neoplatonism. Major works of modern scholarship have studied the pseudo-Dionysius almost exclusively in terms of this doctrinal influence, and even the scholarship which has emphasized the not insignificant Patristic background of Dionysian thought has acknowledged this connection. One notable teaching of Athenian Neoplatonism concerns the structural analogy – here seen as an ontological relation between image and paradigm – between a philosophical discourse and the reality represented evidence of this teaching is provided by the anonymous *Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy*, which states that the dialogues of Plato can be analyzed into literary components corresponding point by point with the six constituents of the universe: either the more typically Platonic set of matter, form, nature, soul, intellect, and divinity, or the partially Aristotelian set of material, formal, efficient, organic, paradigmatic, and final causes.[1] If we can detect a similar doctrine in pseudo-Dionysius, this may assist us in solving a hitherto intractable problem: namely, concerning the structure of his treatise *On Divine Names*.

But first we should turn to Proclus, arguably the most immediate source of Dionysian Neoplatonism, who exploits the structural analogy between discourse and reality in one particularly important context. Towards the end of the second book of his *Platonic Theology*, Proclus concludes his summary of the interpretation of Plato's *Parmenides* by his teacher Syrianus, which he has already explained in detail in his own commentary on that dialogue, with an important observation. This states that when Parmenides expounded the One's transcendence of the divine orders through the sequence of conclusions drawn from the first hypothesis, he took his first starting point by describing the intelligible height of the intellectual gods, continued in descending **[78]** order with the intellectual and lower gods, but then took a second starting point prior to the first by describing the intelligible

1 Anon. *Prolegomena in Platonis Philosophiam* 5, 16. 1–8 and 5, 17. 40–48.

gods themselves.[2] With this latter move, Parmenides was "imitating the return of all things" (τὴν τῶν ὅλων ἐπιστροφὴν ἀπομιμούμενος).[3] Moreover, he was not employing the variety of deductions and the syllogistic method exploited earlier, but using "only intellectual intuition itself (αὐτὴ ἡ νοερὰ ἐπιβολή), "showing by action" (ἔργῳ δείκνυσι), and using "a non-demonstrative reasoning drawing belief from the lower" (λόγος ἀναπόδεικτος ἐκ τῶν χειρόνων τὴν πίστιν ἐφελκόμενος).[4] Here, Proclus is explaining the peculiar fact that among the negative conclusions of the first hypothesis, the negation of multiplicity with respect to the One – multiplicity corresponding to the highest rank of intelligible and intellectual gods – is stated first, but the negation of being with respect to the One – being corresponding to the intelligible gods – is stated last. For our purposes, the most important features of this argument are that the possibility of real principles reverting beyond their initial point of procession is reflected in the adoption by the verbal discourse first, of two distinct starting-points and second, of a transformation of discursive into non-discursive thinking.[5]

This structural analogy between discourse and reality is centered on the relation between divine names and the cycle of procession and reversion, and elsewhere in the second book of the *Platonic Theology*, we find two distinct but complementary accounts of this relation. The first account of the relation between divine names and the cycle of procession and reversion is based on the *Parmenides*. Proclus argues that the first hypothesis reveals the transcendence of the One with respect to the divine ranks and the second hypothesis the procession of entire orders from the One,[6] in such a manner that the negative conclusions of the first hypothesis correspond in number with the affirmative conclusions of the second hypothesis,[7] that the order in which the negative conclusions are taken follows the order of the divine ranks in reality,[8] and that the negative conclusions of the first hypothesis **[79]** are not privative with respect to substrates but productive with respect to contraries.[9] The second account of the relation between divine names and the cycle of procession and reversion is based on a combination of the *Republic* and the *Parmenides*. Proclus argues that whereas the *Republic* manifests the similarity between the secondary realities and the first principle by means of

2 Proclus, *Theologia Platonis*. II 12, 72. 19–26. At *TP* II. 10, 62. 19–63. 7 Proclus explains that the primary aim of the first hypothesis is to show the transcendence of the One with respect to all levels of reality. However, since the multiplicity of lower principles and their distinction from the One is easier to show with respect to lower than to higher levels of reality, it is methodologically more reliable to reserve the most difficult philosophical task for last. For Proclus' earlier statement of this theory, see *Commentarius in Parmenidem* VI, 1091. 24–1092. 15 and 1110. 20–31.

3 *TP* II. 12, 72. 25.

4 *TP* II. 12, 73. 2–11.

5 The point is expanded in the concluding remarks of this chapter at *TP* II. 12, 73. 11–23.

6 *TP* II. 10, 61. 19–62. 18.

7 *TP* II. 10, 61. 19–21.

8 *TP* II. 10, 62. 19–63. 7.

9 *TP* II. 10, 63. 8–17.

analogy and also applies the name "Good" to the first principle as an image of the reversion of the secondary realities to the first principle, the *Parmenides* shows the transcendence of the first principle over the totality of beings by means of negations and also applies the name "One" to the first principle as an image of the procession of the totality of beings from the first principle.[10] Considered as theories of divine names, the account based on the *Parmenides* implies that the name "One" is applied to the first principle and that names like "multiple," "parts and whole," "figure," are applied negatively to the first principle and affirmatively to subsequent terms,[11] whereas the account based on the *Republic* and the *Parmenides* states that the names "Good" and "One" are applied to the first principle with respect to different kinds of relation between secondary realities and the first principle.[12] Thus, a complete mechanism for naming the first principle from one viewpoint either negatively or affirmatively and from another viewpoint either directly or indirectly is established by a combination of these two accounts.

It is perhaps because the verbal discourse's adoption of two distinct starting-points and of a transformation of discursive into non-discursive thinking, as described in the first passage considered above, constitutes a reflection of the real principles' reversion beyond the initial point of their procession, that Proclus can view the discourse no longer as an argument but as a hymn.[13] In fact, the entire final section of the second book of the *Platonic Theology* divides the account of Syrianus' interpretation of the first hypothesis into three parts dealing with the general principles of negation, the application of negation to specific divine names, and a hymn **[80]** to the first God,[14] the part containing the hymn being placed strategically between the other two parts. This part consists of a series of injunctions that we must prostrate ourselves before the sun of the intelligible gods rising from the ocean, and then descend from this "calm" (γαλήνη) towards "intellect" (νοῦς),[15] that we must recall "from the intellect but using the reasoning of the soul" (ἀπὸ νοῦ τοῖς τῆς ψυχῆς χρώμενοι λογισμοῖς) how transcendent we have determined the first god to be in the course of our journey, that we must "celebrate him as if in a hymn" (οἷον ὑμνήσωμεν αὐτόν) as having produced all the ranks of gods, as

10 *TP* II. 5, 37. 12–38. 12 – the analogy in the case of the *Republic* is, of course, the comparison between the Sun and the Good. Cf. *TP* II. 6, 40. 1–41. 17 and *TP* II. 7, 47. 17–48. 8.

11 For a complete list of the names involved, see *TP* II. 12, 66. 18–72. 11.

12 Proclus concludes this chapter by adding two further complications to his theory. First, he notes that names are applied to the first principle with respect to the procession and reversion of the secondary realities but not with respect to the remaining of the latter which is un-nameable (*ibid*. II. 6, 42. 4–8). Second, he states that from another viewpoint both the method of analogy and the method of negation represent varieties of reversion to the first principle (*TP* II. 6, 42. 19–43.1).

13 On the definition of hymn in Proclus see Robert M. van den Berg, *Proclus' Hymns. Essays, Translations, Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), pp. 13–30. As we shall see, there is a difference between conventional hymns and a special kind of "intellectual" hymn. Van den Berg has a few notes on the latter (with reference to the *Timaeus* and the *Parmenides*) on p. 22 ff.

14 These constitute chapters 10 (*TP* II. 10, 61. 10–64.9), 12 (*TP* II. 12, 66. 1–73. 23), and 11 (*TP* II. 11, 64. 10–65. 26), respectively.

15 *TP* II 11, 64. 19–65. 3.

being the god of all gods, and as being concealed among the intelligible gods,[16] and that only then can we descend again from this "intellectual hymnody" (νοερὰ ὑμνῳδία) towards "reasoning" (λογισμοί), and expound the transcendence of the first god with irrefutable dialectic.[17] If the reflection of the structure of reality by the structure of discourse and the transformation of discursive into non-discursive thinking are the really salient aspects of hymnody in this passage – rather than the obvious fact that hymns praise God by the enumeration of divine names –[18] we can understand how Proclus the theurgist can elsewhere describe the lotus flower when extending and contracting its petals in imitation of the rising and setting sun as performing a non-rational "physical hymn"(ὕμνος φυσικός).[19]

Now there can be little doubt that pseudo-Dionysius also seems to think of his treatise *On the Divine Names* as a hymn, since he applies the verb "to hymn" (ὑμνεῖν) to his descriptions of the individual names with remarkable persistence[20] and also inserts quotations from his teacher Hierotheos' *Hymns of Desire* at a particularly important point in the treatise as a whole. If we can show that Dionysius is exploiting the specifically intellectual kind of hymnody described earlier – *i.e.* making the structure of discourse reflect the structure of reality and expressing the transformation of discursive into non-discursive thinking – then we may be able to understand the structure of *DN* in a manner that has not been possible hitherto.

[81] The question regarding the structure of Dionysius' treatise is perhaps a timely one, having been raised in a most provocative way by the recent study of Christian Schäfer entitled *Philosophy of Dionysius the Areopagite*.[21] Schäfer revives certain aspects of Albert the Great's and Thomas Aquinas' interpretation of this Dionysian text. He argues against the views of modern scholars like Paul Rorem and Andrew Louth,[22] who have noted the loose construction especially of its later chapters, that the work has a clearly defined beginning, middle, and end.

16 *TP* II 11, 65. 3–15. Proclus adds that the first god is more ineffable than any silence and more unknowable than any existence, the silence and existence being normally associated specifically with the intelligible gods.

17 *TP* II. 11, 65. 16–26.

18 Although Proclus is perhaps exploiting this more obvious meaning of hymnody when he describes the entire first hypothesis (at *CP* VII. 1191, 34–35) and the entire second hypothesis (at *TP* I. 7, 31. 25–27) of the *Parmenides* as hymns, one cannot exclude the possibility that the connotations of representation and non-discursivity are present there also.

19 See *De Arte Sacrificia* 149. 12–18. Cf. *AS* 148, 10–18 on heliotropes and selenotropes.

20 A list of examples would include Dionysius, *DN* 4. 5, 700 D (149. 9–10), 4. 35, 736 B (180. 1), 6. 1, 856 A (190. 3), 7. 1, 865 B (193. 5–6), 7. 4, 872 C (198. 21), 10. 1, 936 D (214. 9–10). The hymns of his teacher Hierotheos are mentioned at *DN* 4. 14, 713 A.

21 Christian Schäfer, *Philosophy of Dionysius the Areopagite: An Introduction to the Structure and the Content of the Treatise On the Divine Names* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2006).

22 See Andrew Louth, *Denys the Areopagite* (Wilton, CT, 1989), p. 92, Paul Rorem, *Pseudo-Dionysius: A Commentary on the Texts and an Introduction to their Influence* (Oxford-New York, 1993), p. 158.

Schäfer also adopts ideas from Endre von Ivánka and Hans-Urs von Balthasar, the two most significant modern advocates of the structural approach to *DN*. The main feature of von Ivánka's interpretation is the identification of two primary triads of divine names: the group Being, Life, and Wisdom in chapters 5–7, which is assumed to be derived from Proclus, and the group Wisdom, Power, and Peace in chapters 8 and 10–11, which is said to have been drawn from Gregory of Nyssa.[23] According to this interpreter, names like Greatness and Smallness, and Sameness and Difference mentioned in chapter 9, which are thought to have been derived from Plato's *Parmenides*, play a merely ancillary role with respect to the second main triad.[24] The main feature of von Balthasar's interpretation is the notion of a cycle of procession, reversion, and union as underlying the entire text, with all the names between Good in chapter 4 and Wisdom in chapter 7 representing the first phase, those between Wisdom in chapter 7 and Peace in chapter 11 the second phase, and those between Holy of Holies in chapter 12 and Unity in chapter 13 representing the third phase.[25] According to this interpreter, the names One and Good in chapters 1 and 4 form together with the names Perfection and Unity in chapter 13 the point of closure within a single cycle of creation and providence.[26]

Schäfer's own reading adopts the notion of the two primary triads and also the idea of a single underlying cycle yet introduces an innovation. **[82]** This involves reading the names between Power in chapter 8 and Peace in chapter 11 as constituting what he terms a "halt" – a moment of stability between procession and reversion – and the names between Holy of Holies in chapter 12 and Unity in chapter 13 as constituting the reversion proper. Schäfer finds authoritative support for his notion of a halt in a statement of the Apostle Paul at Romans 11: 36 "For of him, and through him, and to him are all things," and in the commentaries on *DN* by the medieval thinkers Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas,[27] his arguments for the same notion being based on the connotation of stability which he detects in the names Salvation and Redemption in chapter 8, in the antithetical relation between names like Greatness and Smallness in chapters 9 and 10, and in the name Peace of chapter 11.[28] In fact, this interpretation means that Dionysius

23 Endre von Ivánka, *Plato Christianus. Übernahme und Umgestaltung des Platonismus durch die Väter* (Einsiedeln, 1964), pp. 234–242.

24 von Ivánka 1964, pp. 234–235.

25 Hans-Urs von Balthasar, *Herrlichkeit. Eine theologische Ästhetik*, vol. 2 (Einsiedeln, 1962), pp. 151, 166ff., 189ff.

26 von Balthasar 1962, *loc. cit.* Schäfer 2006, pp. 43–44 rightly decides not to utilize the implausible reading of *DN* by I. P. Sheldon-Williams, "The ps.-Dionysius and the Holy Hierotheos," in *Studia Patristica* 8 (Berlin, 1966), pp. 108–117 according to which the names in chapters 5–7 relate to the level of intellect, those in chapters 7–9 to that of soul, and those in chapters 12–13 to that of body.

27 Schäfer 2006, pp. 30, 64, n. 19, 66.

28 Schäfer 2006, pp. 37–41, 89–111.

is rethinking the original Proclean cycle of causality where a phase of remaining comes before the phases of procession and reversion with a supposedly more Christian causal cycle where the phase of remaining comes between the other phases. According to Schäfer, there are several passages in Dionysius' treatise which explicitly state this novel position.[29]

It is the present writer's view that, although Christian Schäfer is basically correct in arguing that *DN* is systematically structured throughout, his thesis regarding the remaining between procession and reversion needs correction. A close reading of Dionysius' treatise may indeed detect moments of stability within the dynamic flux of procession and reversion. However, these result either from the intersecting of two cycles of procession and reversion or from the presence of smaller cycles within larger cycles, in both cases in accordance with Proclus' approach. We hope to explain this feature through the consideration of three questions: *1*. What is the rationale behind the ordering of the names in chapters 5–13? *2*. Why does chapter 4 on the name Good have such a disproportionate length? *3*. What is the nature of the contrast between chapters 1–3 and the remainder of the text?[30]

First Question: *What is the rationale behind the ordering of the names in chapters 4–13?*

[83] The key to understanding the ordering of the names in chapter 5–13 lies in its background in Platonic philosophy. This involves the interpretation of *DN* as the unfolding of the causal cycle – the "cyclic activity" (ἐνέργεια κυκλική) of Proclus' *Elements of Theology*, prop. # 33[31] – in a systematic and consistent manner throughout the text. This interpretation becomes possible if one assumes that there are what we shall term "major phases" of remaining, procession, and reversion, each of which contains "minor phases" reflecting the larger structure in the pattern REMAINING >remaining, procession, reversion, PROCESSION >remaining, procession, reversion, and REVERSION> remaining, procession, reversion. The interpretation depends on the further assumption that the relation

29 Schäfer 2006 quotes three passages of which only the second seems to support his position. *1*. Dionysius, *De Divinis Nominibus* 1. 4, 592 CD (115. 6–10) on pp. 49–50. But this refers to a somewhat different notion of the human soul's detachment from the exterior and uses the word ἀναπαυεῖν rather than μένειν. *2*. Dionysius, *DN* 4. 14, 712D–713 A (160. 12–15) on p. 61. This does rather unusually speak of the Godhead as προιὼν ἀεὶ καὶ μένων καὶ ἀποκαθιστάμενος – on the interpretation see below. *3*. Dionysius *DN* 5. 5, 820 BC (184. 2–14) on p. 61. This passage, however, seems definitely to place the remaining before the procession. Cf. Schäfer's further comments on pp. 74, 89–90.

30 Consideration of all three questions will show how Dionysius makes the structure of discourse reflect the structure of reality, and consideration of question *2* how he expresses thereby the transformation of discursive into non-discursive thinking.

31 Proclus, *Elementatio Theologica*, 36. 11–12.

between the major and minor phases is such that the first minor phase >remaining of the major phase REMAINING, the second minor phase >procession of the major phase PROCESSION, and the third minor phase >reversion of the major phase REVERSION represent the maximal points of remaining, procession, and reversion, respectively.[32]

This pattern can be found everywhere in the writings of the later Athenian School of Platonism – provided that one is alert to the appearance of such synonyms as LIMIT >limit, infinity, mixture, INFINITY >limit, infinity, mixture, and MIXTURE >limit, infinity, mixture, or alternatively BEING >being, life, intellect, LIFE > being, life, intellect, and INTELLECT >being, life, intellect. As the fundamental architectonic principle for the arrangement of the divine orders in Proclus' *Platonic Theology*, it is fully revealed for the first time in the latter's discussion of the doctrine regarding the intelligible gods which he believes to be stated in Plato's *Philebus*,[33] beginning with a distinction between a transcendent triad of limit, infinity, and mixture linking the One with the intelligible order and a coordinate triad of limit, infinity, and mixture within the intelligible order itself.[34] The logical principle underlying the development of the pattern is explicitly stated when Proclus concludes one phase of his discussion by saying that "everything is in each thing, but a different term has predominated in the case of each intelligible" (καὶ γὰρ ἐν ἑκάστῳ πάντα καὶ ἄλλο ἐν ἄλλῳ διαφερόντως ὑφέστηκε τῶν νοητῶν).[35]

[84] Since this is not the place for an extensive discussion of Proclus' *Platonic Theology*, we shall confine ourselves to listing the most relevant passages in Book III in tabular form.[36] In any case, it is probably the discussion of these intelligible gods that formed the inspiration behind Dionysius' discussion of the intelligible divine names.[37]

32 For a full account of these structures and their metaphysical implications in Proclus and Damascius, see Stephen Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena: An Investigation of the Prehistory and Evolution of the Pseudo-Dionysian Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 1978), pp. 141–152. For the background of this thinking in Porphyry, see Pierre Hadot, *Porphyre et Victorinus* (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1968), pp. 213–246.

33 Proclus, *TP* III. 8, 30. 15-III. 14, 52. 11.

34 Proclus, *TP* III. 10, 41. 20–42. 12.

35 *TP* III. 13, 49. 1–2. For everything in everything cf. *TP* III. 13, 47. 3–19, and for predominance *TP* III. 13, 47. 20–22. Cf. Proclus, *ET*, prop. # 103, 92. 13–29.

36 Our analysis will exclude Proclus' discussion of the terms symmetry, truth, and beauty. Although important for the interpretation of Plato, these terms play a less important architectonic role at this point. On symmetry, truth, and beauty, see *TP* III. 11, 43. 1–44. 20.

37 For a discussion of the close relation between Book I of the *Platonic Theology* and Dionysius see István Perczel, "Pseudo-Dionysius and the *Platonic Theology.* A Preliminary Study," in *Proclus et la Théologie Platonicienne*, Actes du colloque international de Louvain, 13–16 mai 1998, en l'honneur de H.-D. Saffrey et L. G. Westerink, eds. Alain-Philippe Segonds and Carlos Steel (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2000), pp. 491–532. Although the similarities between the two writers on matters of theological methodology are often striking, Perczel's idea that Dionysius was simply making a cento of citations from Proclus is hardly convincing.

Distinction of Major and Minor Phases: πέρας, ἀπειρία, μικτόν – *TP* III. 14, 51, 15–19.
Major Phases: μονή, πρόοδος, ἐπιστροφή – *TP* III. 14. 50. 4–11.[38]
πέρας, ἀπειρία, μικτόν – *TP* III. 13, 47. 13–16; III. 13. 47, 19–20.[39]
ὄν, ζωή. νοῦς – *TP* III. 14, 49. 12–18.[40]
Minor Phases: first major phase + πὲρας, ἀπειρία, μικτόν – *TP* III. 12, 44. 22–45. 12[41]
second major phase + ὄν, ζωή, νοῦς – *TP* III. 12, 45. 28–46. 12.[42]
third major phase + πέρας, ἀπειρία, μικτόν – *TP* III. 14, 51. 3–8.[43]

Turning now to Dionysius' discussion of the intelligible names in *DN*, we can see that this same pattern recurs albeit with the terminology modified in line with a Christian agenda. In fact, it can be shown that three major phases each containing three minor phases are distributed through nine chapters in the latter part of this text.

1. The major phase of remaining (chapters 5–7)

[85] In accordance with the initiating function of this section and its association with unity, we find fewer names than in phases 2 and 3. Names of a more philosophical character begin the sequence.

1.1. The minor phase of remaining (chapter 5)

That the discussion of the name Being represents the maximal point of remaining in the theonymic system of Dionysius is indicated by the occurrence of many features normally associated with the phase of remaining in the philosophy of the Athenian School. When the writer characterizes Being as "ineffable, unknowable, and unrevealed" (ἄρρητον . . . ἀγνωστόν . . . ἀνέκφαντον),[44] he echoes the language which the conclusion of the first hypothesis of the *Parmenides* applies to the intelligible gods. This Being is also "placed before" (προβέβληται) all other

38 The second phase is actually remaining + procession here. But this does not significantly change the doctrine.
39 These passages summarize the theory. For more details, see *TP* III, 13. 47. 1–5 (limit – also remaining); III. 13. 47. 5–7, III. 13. 47. 12–13; III. 13. 47. 17–18, III. 13. 47. 22–48. 2 (infinity – also life and power); III. 13. 47. 7–11 (mixture).
40 Cf. *TP* III. 9, 35. 8–36. 10.
41 The second phase is also power.
42 The second phase is also power. Cf. Proclus, *ET*, prop. # 103, 92. 13–29 for a more abstract formulation of the triad of being, life, intellect.
43 The first phase is also being, the second also power. At *TP* III. 14, 51. 22–27 Proclus calls the first phase being, the second power or dyad, and the third multiplicity.
44 Dionysius, *DN* 5. 1, 816 B (180. 10–11).

participated terms.[45] As "measure" (μέτρον) of everything that follows,[46] Being has a status analogous to that of the limit which is synonymous with remaining in Proclus' system. This Being exists in the causal mode – opposed to the substantial mode or the participating mode of existence by the Athenian School[47] – since it itself is "the pre-existent" (ὁ προών, τὸ προεῖναι)[48] while all subsequent things have their "being" (εἶναι) in it.[49]

1.2. The minor phase of procession (chapter 6)

Since the architecture of the Dionysian system requires a minor phase of procession within the major phase of remaining, we would expect to find phraseology associating the second name Life with both procession and remaining. This indeed seems to occur when the writer praises Life not only in terms of giving as overflow but in terms of undiminished overflow. Thus, it is through its "overflow of goodness" (περιουσία ἀγαθότητος) that the name Life confers on celestial lives their "indestructibility" (ἀνώλεθρον), their "unswerving and unerring perpetuity of motion" (ἀρρεπὴς καὶ ἀπαρέγκλιτος ἀεικινήσια), and their "immortality" (ἀθανασία).[50] The close relation between giving as overflow and undiminished overflow is stated here according to the doctrine of two consecutive propositions in Proclus' *Elements of Theology*.[51]

1.3. The minor phase of reversion (chapter 7)

[86] The structure of Dionysius' system also requires a minor phase of reversion within the major phase of remaining. That the name Wisdom is associated with both reversion and remaining is indicated by the argument that Wisdom "by knowing itself will know all things" (ἑαυτὴν . . . γινώσκουσαι πάντα).[52] According to the Athenian School, knowing of the self represents – along with substantiating the self and vivifying the self – one of the primary modes of reversion[53] Moreover for Proclus and his circle, knowledge of subsequent things in the order of reality involves pre-containment of their causes: a mode of remaining. Dionysius makes this last point by comparing Wisdom to light which "pre-contains in itself causally the knowledge of darkness" (κατ'αἰτίαν ἐν ἑαυτῷ τὴν εἴδησιν τοῦ σκότους).[54]

45 *DN* 5. 5, 820A (183. 18), 5. 6, 820 C (184. 17–18).
46 *DN* 5. 4, 817C (182. 20).
47 See Proclus, *ET*, prop. # 65, 62. 13–23 and prop. # 67, 64. 1–14.
48 Dionysius, *DN* 5. 5, 820A (183. 14), 5. 8, 821 D (186. 10), 5. 10, 825B (189. 7).
49 *DN* 5 5, 820C (184. 12–15), 5. 8, 821CD (186. 1–12).
50 *DN* 6. 1, 856 B-6. 2, 856 D (191. 1–192. 5).
51 Proclus, *ET*, prop. # 26, 30. 10–24 and prop. 27, 30. 25–32. 9.
52 Dionysius, *DN* 7. 2, 869 A-C (196. 12–197. 16)
53 See Proclus, *ET*, prop. # 42, 44. 11-prop. #43, 44. 32, prop. # 189, 164. 20–32, and Damascius, *De Primis Principiis* II. 135. 20–136. 2.
54 Dionysius, *DN* 7. 2, 869 B (196. 21–197. 2).

2. The major phase of procession (chapters 8–10)

These chapters of *DN* are characterized by the multiplicity of the names involved and by the prevalence of power and associated notions. In the philosophy of the Athenian School, multiplicity and power are both associated with procession and often identified with the latter. The sequence begins and ends with more biblical names, having more philosophical names in its central phase.

2.1. The minor phase of remaining (chapter 8)

Two of the names occurring later in this chapter – Justice and Salvation – have connections with the notion of limit Thus, Justice is praised for "defining the order and all assignments and ranks in each case" (καὶ διακόσμησιν καὶ πάσας διανομὰς καὶ τάξεις ἀφορίζων ἑκάστῳ),[55] and Salvation for "preserving the being and rank proper to each thing as distinct from other things" (τὴν ἰδίαν ἑκάστου καὶ καθαρὰν ἀπὸ τῶν ἄλλων οὐσίαν καὶ τάξιν ἀποσῴζουσα).[56] The limit that is assigned or maintained in these passages corresponds with the remaining that Proclus' understands as the first member of any causal triad. Since we are dealing with a minor phase of remaining within a major phase of procession, we should not be surprised also to find references indicating the important role of procession in this part of his discussion. An example occurs when Dionysius explains the name Power which inaugurates this chapter by saying that God is "of infinite power, and **[87]** in his superabundance of power produces an infinite number of other powers from existent powers an infinite number of times" (ἀπειροδύναμος . . . τῷ ὑπερδύνασθαι καὶ ἀπεἰρακις ἀπείρους τῶν οὐσῶν δυνάμεων ἑτέρας παραγάγειν).[57] In referring here to both power and infinity, he introduces two terms corresponding to the procession understood by Proclus to be the second member of any causal triad.

2.2. The minor phase of procession (chapter 9)

That the discussion of the names Greatness, Smallness, Sameness, Difference, Similarity, Dissimilarity, Rest, and Motion represents the maximal point of procession in the theonymic system of Dionysius seems to be confirmed by a number of features present in this chapter. First, there is the unusually large number of the names, plurality being associated with procession in the philosophy of the Athenian School.[58] Second, the occurrence of the names in pairs is significant, duality also being associated with procession by the same thinkers.[59] Third, the

55 *DN* 8. 7, 893 D-896 A (204. 5–8).

56 *DN* 8. 9, 896 D (205. 16–19).

57 *DN* 8. 2, 889D-892A (201. 1–16). Cf. 8. 3, 892 B (201. 17–21).

58 See Proclus, *ET,* prop. # 21, 24. 1–21. At *MT* 3, 1033 BC (147. 4–14) Dionysius himself associates increase in the number of divine names with cognitive descent (*i.e.* procession) and decrease in the number of names with cognitive ascent (reversion).

59 See Proclus. *TP* III. 14. 51. 22–27, III. 18, 58. 18–23.

comments on two of the names – Greatness and Smallness – include reference to the possibility of their existing in infinite form.[60] Finally, the philosophical rather than biblical style of these particular names was perhaps thought by a Christian writer to be consistent with the distance from God marked by their procession.

2.3. The minor phase of reversion (chapter 10)

The structure of Dionysius' system also requires a minor phase of reversion within the major phase of procession. That the name Omnipotent is associated with both reversion and procession is indicated by the argument that God "produces everything from himself as though from an omnipotent root and then returns all things to himself as though to an omnipotent stem" (τὰ ὅλα καθάπερ ἐκ ῥίζης παντοκρατορικῆς προάγουσα καὶ εἰς ἑαυτὴν τὰ πάντα καθάπερ εἰς πυθμένα παντοκρατορικὸν ἐπιστρέφουσα).[61] In accordance with the tendency towards plurality of nomenclature in this major phase, Dionysius here introduces further names suggesting the notions of eternity and time. Since Youthful and Ageless signify God's "procession from the beginning through all things until the end" (τὸ ἐξ ἀρχῆς διὰ πάντων **[88]** ἄχρι τέλους . . . προιέναι),[62] we can discern the association with procession and reversion in this case also.

3. The major phase of reversion (chapters 11–13)

In accordance with the mediating function of this section and its association with both unity and multiplicity, we find more names than in phase 1 but fewer names than in phase 2. Names of a more philosophical character end the sequence.

3.1. The minor phase of remaining (chapter 11)

Since the architecture of the Dionysian system requires a minor phase of remaining within the major phase of reversion, we would expect to find phraseology associating the first name Peace with both remaining and reversion. This indeed seems to occur when the writer praises Peace on one occasion, in terms of its "ineffability and immobility with respect to any known procession" (ἀφθεγξία . . . καὶ ἐπὶ πᾶσαν γιγνωσκομένην πρόοδον ἀκινησία).[63] Although the passage begins by quoting the opinion of "Holy Justus," a terminological shift towards a typically Proclean formulation of the moment of remaining quickly becomes apparent.[64] In another passage, Dionysius praises Peace on grounds that it "makes the particularity

60 Infinite greatness is mentioned at Dionysius, *DN* 9. 2, 909 C (208. 8–17) and infinite smallness at *DN* 9. 3, 912 B (209. 6–8).

61 *DN* 10. 1, 936 D-937 A (214. 13–15).

62 *DN* 10. 2, 937 BC (215. 14–216. 1).

63 *DN* 11. 1, 949A (218. 7–9).

64 Proclus, *ET,* prop. # 26, 30. 10–24.

of the multiple return towards the universality of unity" (τὸ μεριστόν . . . πλῆθος ἐπιστρεφούσης εἰς τῆν ὅλην ἑνότητα).[65]

3.2. The minor phase of procession (chapter 12)

The structure of Dionysius' system also requires a minor phase of procession within the major phase of reversion. That the frequently occurring biblical names Holy of Holies, King of Kings, Lord of Lords, and God of Gods, and so forth are associated with procession is shown by references to God as "infinite in names" (ἀπειρώνυμος) and to the "doubling of names" (διπλασιασμὸς τῶν ὀνομάτων),[66] infinity and duality being normally associated with this moment in the philosophy of the Athenian School.[67] The precise interpretation of these names is explained in an interlude towards the end of the previous chapter where Dionysius explains that the abstract terms from which divine names are derived can be understood in three ways: as "participating" (μετέχον), as "participated" (μετεχόμενον), and as **[89]** "un-participated" (ἀμέθεκτον).[68] Considered in this way, the terms "holy" or "king" signify either the celestial beings as participating terms or their properties as participated terms, whereas the terms "Holy of Holies" and "King of Kings" signify the un-participated term.[69] This group of terms which is explained in two consecutive propositions in Proclus' *Elements of Theology* reflects the notion of reversion through its triadic form.[70]

3.3 The minor phase of reversion (chapter 13)

That the discussion of the names Perfect and One represents the maximal point of reversion in the theonymic system of Dionysius seems to be confirmed by certain features present in this chapter. The name Perfect is associated with the reversion according to the philosophy of the Athenian School since imperfect power or potentiality is converted into perfect power or actuality as it reverts,[71] and Dionysius seems to follow this usage. The connection between the name One and reversion only emerges through the identification of the One and the Good towards the end of the chapter. The writer explains that this One is not the arithmetical unity correlated with multiplicity:[72] rather, it is that whereby all things are identical with it in their transcendent mode[73] and whereby it is identical with all things in its

65 Dionysius, *DN* 11. 1, 948D (217. 7–10).
66 *DN* 12. 1, 969AB (224. 1–7).
67 See Syrianus, *Commentarius in Metaphysica* 46. 22–25, Damascius, *PP* I. 35. 17 and I. 68. 16–17.
68 Dionysius, *DN* 11.6, 953 D-956 A (222. 13–223. 3).
69 *DN* 12. 4, 972 AB (225. 14–20).
70 Proclus, *ET,* props. # 63, 60. 1-# 64, 62. 12.
71 *ET*, prop. # 44, 46. 1–12 and props. # 77, 72. 20-# 78, 74. 17.
72 Dionysius, *DN* 13. 2, 980 A (227. 13–228. 2).
73 *DN* 13. 2, 980 B (228. 3–11).

immanent mode.[74] Since it is also that which transcends both limit and infinity,[75] both the "one being" (ἓν ὄν) and the "being one" (ὂν ἕν),[76] and both trinity and a unity,[77] we cannot express its nature in any nomenclature. Nevertheless, "in our desire to understand something and say something about that ineffable nature, we consecrate for it primarily the most hallowed of names" (πόθῳ τοῦ νοεῖν τι καὶ λέγειν τι περὶ τῆς ἀρρήτου φύσεως ἐκείνης τὸ τῶν ὀνομάτων σεπτότατον αὐτῇ πρώτως ἀφιεροῦμεν).[78] In justifying our speaking of the first principle as Good, Dionysius here echoes the words of Proclus in justifying our speaking of that principle as One.[79] In both cases, it is the desire associated with reversion that makes utterance possible with respect to the ineffable.

Second Question: *Why does chapter 4 on the name Good have such a disproportionate length?*

[90] The second question posed at the beginning of our analysis of *DN* concerned the disproportionate length of chapter 4 on the name Good. If we apply the principles of interpretation already applied to chapters 5 to 13 once again – asking whether the name under discussion relates more closely to remaining, procession, or reversion – we have to conclude that in this case a complete cycle of causality with its terms distinguished on one level only – in sequence rather than with respect to major and minor phases – seems to be implied. On this basis, there is a kind of metaphysical necessity for Dionysius' more extended treatment of the name Good and the other associated names.

The chapter falls almost exactly into two halves distinguished by both style and subject-matter. In the first half of this chapter (sections 1–17 of the critical edition), we are immediately informed that the divine authorities "mark off the Good by a boundary, it seems to me" (ἀφορίζουσιν αὐτήν, ὡς οἶμαι) from the other names because it indicates how God by his very being "extends goodness to all existing things" (εἰς πάντα τὰ ὄντα διατείνει τῆν ἀγαθότητα).[80] Dionysius then explains that all the intelligible and intellectual beings receive their substances, powers, and activities; all souls receive their being, life, and intelligence; and all the heavenly bodies receive their order and movement from the Good.[81] Moreover, the name Light is can be associated with the name Good because the former – constituting the visible image of the latter in the specific form of the sun – "returns all things to itself" (τὰ πάντα εἰς ἑαυτήν . . . ἐπιστρέφει).[82] An even more explicit sense

74 *DN* 13. 2, 980 C (228. 14–16).
75 *DN* 13. 3, 980 C (228. 18–22).
76 *DN* 13. 3, 980 CD (228. 20–229. 5).
77 *DN* 13. 3, 981 A (229. 6–14).
78 *DN* 13. 3, 981A (229. 15–17).
79 Proclus, *Comm. in Parm.* VII, p. 58, 1–17 Klibansky-Labowsky.
80 Dionysius, *DN* 4. 1, 693 B (143. 9–144. 1).
81 *DN* 4. 1, 693 B-4. 4, 697 B (144. 1–147. 1).
82 *DN* 4. 4, 700 A-C (148. 3–149. 8).

of circularity emerges in connection with the name Beauty. Using terminology that recalls the higher logic of the Platonists, the author notes that application of this name signifies that God is the cause of all "determinate essences" (οὐσιώδεις ὑπάρξεις), and of all sameness and otherness, and motion and rest.[83] This point leads to an extended explanation of the threefold motions of intellects and souls whereby they move in a circle as unified with the irradiations from the Good – *i.e*. their remaining – , in a straight line as exercising providence over the lower – *i.e*. their procession – , and in a spiral as both unified with the higher and providing for the lower – *i.e*. their reversion.[84] This section also includes reminiscences of the lower logic of the Aristotelians, since the name Beauty further signifies that God is the cause of all quality and quantity, and of all final, efficient and formal causality.[85] The first half of the chapter **[91]** continues with a discussion of the name Desire (ἔρως), and the author immediately justifies the use of this term – rather than the more usual Love (ἀγάπη) – on the basis of Scripture, adding for good measure that we should be concentrating not on the "utterance" (λέξις) itself but on the "intention" (σκοπός) of the utterance, and not on "unintelligent letters" (γραμμαὶ ἀνοητοί) but on "nameless intuitions" (ἀνόμματοι ἐπιβολαί).[86] Dionysius then explains that it is through Desire that higher beings exercise providence towards the lower, that beings of equal status display regard for one another, and that lower beings return divinely towards the higher.[87] Finally, God himself is sometimes referred to as Desire and Love and sometimes as Desired and Loved, because he is himself the motion which "both flows forth from the Good towards beings and also then returns again to the Good" (καὶ ἐκ τἀγαθοῦ τοῖς οὖσιν ἐκβλυζομένη καὶ αὖθις εἰς τἀγαθὸν ἐπιστρεφομένη).[88] The author concludes this part of his discussion by quoting from his teacher Hierotheos' *Hymns of Desire* a kind of summary of what has just been said about Good, Beautiful, and Desire.[89]

It should be noted that the discussion of the name Good in the first half of chapter 4 not only ends but also begins with references to Hierotheos "my famous teacher" (ὁ κλεινὸς καθηγεμὼν ἡμῶν),[90] the actual rhetorical beginning of the discussion being placed in an interlude towards the end of chapter 3.[91] With this arrangement, Dionysius clearly wants us to understand that this entire discussion of the name Good is actually a report of Hierotheos' teaching: a literary device which tends to separate the material of chapter 4 as a whole logically from that in the chapters to follow. But there is something beyond literature implied here. Dionysius goes on

83 *DN* 4. 7, 704 BC (152. 10–153. 3).
84 *DN* 4. 8, 704 D-4. 9, 705 B (153. 4–154. 6).
85 *DN* 4. 10, 705B-708 A (154. 7–155. 7).
86 *DN* 4. 11, 708B-709A (154. 1–157. 8).
87 *DN* 4. 12, 709 D-4. 13, 712 A (158. 13–159. 8).
88 *DN* 4. 14, 712C-713A (160. 1–15).
89 *DN* 4. 14, 713 A-4. 17, 713 D (160. 15–162. 5).
90 Cf. *DN* 3. 2, 681A (139. 17–18). As frequently noted, this Greek phrase recalls Proclus' habitual method of referring to his teacher Syrianus as "our teacher" (ὁ ἡμέτερος καθηγεμών).
91 This arrangement is found elsewhere in *DN*. See our discussion # 3.2 earlier.

to explain that he is "unfolding and distinguishing, in a discourse proportionate to his powers, the condensed and unified enfoldings of that man's most intellective power" (ἀναπτύξαι καὶ διακρῖναι τῷ ἡμῖν συμμέτρῳ λὸγῳ τᾶς συνοπτικὰς καὶ ἑνιαίας τῆς νοερωτάτης τἀνδρὸς ἐκείνου δυνάμεως συνελίξεις).[92] Since the technical vocabulary shows clearly that the literary relation between Hierotheos' and Dionysius' discourses represents the metaphysical relation between remaining and procession, we are probably justified in understanding the first half of chapter 4 and chapters 5–13 as corresponding to further **[92]** phases of remaining and procession respectively encompassing the major and minor phases discussed earlier.[93]

The second half of chapter 4 (sections 18–35 of the critical edition) is composed in a very different style. Here, Dionysius answers an objection raised in the manner of a schoolroom debate that, since the demons have fallen from the angelic inclination towards the Good, it cannot be maintained that every being returns to the Good. More specifically, three questions are posed: *1*. What made the demons evil?, *2*. What is the nature of evil?, and *3*. Why did the Good permit evil to occur?[94] The second question is answered first by arguing that evil is neither a being, nor a non-being, but is in beings[95] Dionysius then surveys the entire order of the universe in order to show that evil is not present in the Good or in beings,[96] in angels,[97] human souls,[98] irrational animals,[99] nature as a whole,[100] bodies,[101] or matter *qua* matter.[102] In the course of this survey, he answers the first question by saying that the demons are not evil in respect of their being but only with respect to lack of being,[103] and adds to the answer to the second question by noting that evil is associated with the particular rather than the universal[104] and that evil is not associated with necessity.[105] Dionysius next prepares the answer to the third question and adds further to the answer to the second question by arguing that goodness arises from the one universal cause, whereas evil arises from the multiplicity of particular deficiencies[106] – evil being

92 *DN* 3. 2, 681 B (140. 6–10).

93 There is no real inconsistency between interpreting the first part of chapter 4 as corresponding *a*. to the cycle of remaining, procession, and reversion as a whole and *b.* to the remaining only, since the stability of the process is implicit in both viewpoints. For another reason to interpret chapters 5–13 as a single movement of process, see the analysis of chapter 1 later.

94 *DN* 4. 18, 713 D-716 B (162. 6–163. 60).

95 *DN* 4. 19, 716 B-4. 20, 721 B (163. 7–168. 11).

96 *DN* 4. 21, 721C-724 A (168. 12–169. 19).

97 *DN* 4. 22, 724 BC (169. 20–170. 11).

98 *DN* 4. 24, 725 D- 728 A (172. 12–20).

99 *DN* 4. 25, 728 B (173. 1–9).

100 *DN* 4. 26, 728 C (173. 10–16).

101 *DN* 4. 27, 728 D (173. 17–174. 3).

102 *DN* 4. 28, 729 AB (174. 4–175. 4).

103 *DN* 4. 23, 724 C-725 C (170. 12–172. 11).

104 *DN* 4. 26, 728 C (173. 10–16). This comment is made in connection with the dissociation of evil from nature as a whole.

105 *DN* 4. 28, 729 AB (174. 14–175. 4). This comment is made in connection with the dissociation of evil from matter *qua* matter, necessity having been traditionally associated with matter.

106 *DN* 4. 30, 729 C-4. 31, 732 C (175. 10–177. 2).

further associated with the accidental.[107] Finally, he addresses the third question by arguing that the **[93]** Good – as Providence – does not produce evil but makes use of evil effects in order to turn them to particular or common advantage.[108]

We will not discuss the intricacies of these philosophical questions in further detail – this part of *DN* chapter 4 is especially well known because its verbal and conceptual similarities with Proclus' essay *On the Existence of Evils* were seen to provide the crucial evidence for Dionysius philosophical dependence on Athenian Platonism and indeed for his position in the history of philosophy as such.[109] For our purposes, the most important issue is the stylistic contrast between the dialectical form of the discussion introduced by the phrase: "But someone might say . . . " (καίτοι φαίη τις . . .) and further characterized as "the expression of such great difficulty" (τοιόσδε ἀπορὼν λόγος) on the one hand[110] and the semantic exploration of the various names under which God is praised in the remainder of chapter 4 and indeed in the entire sequence running from chapter 5 to chapter 13 on the other. We should recall that two of the defining features of Proclus' notion of hymnody were reflection of the structure of reality by the structure of discourse and transformation of discursive into non-discursive thinking. The organization of the divine names as a sequence of remaining, procession, and reversion has perhaps been sufficient to exemplify the reflection of the structure of reality by the structure of discourse. Is it possible that the transformation of discursive into non-discursive thinking is exemplified by the contrast between the dialectical form and the semantic exploration in chapter 4? That Dionysius is thinking along these lines is indicated by the chapter's concluding remarks in which he declines to debate these issues further, having already in his treatise entitled *Concerning Justice and the Judgment of God* rebuked "sophistical arguments and idle chatter (σοφιστικούς . . . λαλοῦντας . . . λόγους) imputing injustice and falsehood to God, and being "content to raise a hymn the Good" (καθ'ἡμᾶς ἀρκούντως ὕμνηται τἀγαθόν the present work. The passage ends by summarizing all the aspects of the divinity explored at length earlier in the chapter – the remaining, proceeding, and reverting – in the form of a litany based on a sevenfold repetition of the phrase ["to praise him"] "as" (ὡς) . . . .[111]

Third Question: *What is the nature of the contrast between chapters 1–3 and the remainder of the text?*

107 *DN* 4. 32, 732 CD (177. 3–15).

108 *DN* 4. 33, 733A-C (178. 3–17).

109 For the most recent discussion of this question see Sarah Klitenic Wear and John Dillon, *Dionysius the Areopagite and the Neoplatonist Tradition. Despoiling the Hellenes*, Aldershot: Ashgate 2007, pp. 75–84.

110 *DN* 4. 18. 713D (162. 6) and 4. 19, 716 B (163. 7).

111 *DN* 4. 35, 736 AB (179. 18–180. 7). Dionysius explicitly raises the question of non-discursive thinking at the beginning of chapter 4 when he compares the Good's and the sun's extension of goodness to all things. The sun illuminates "not by reasoning or choosing but by its being as such" (οὐ λογιζόμενος ἢ προαιρούμενος, ἀλλ' αὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι). See *DN* 4. 1, 693B (144. 1–5).

[94] The third question posed at the beginning of our analysis of *DN* concerned the contrast between chapters 1–3 and the remainder of the treatise. Without venturing into a complete discussion of these chapters, it is possible to apply the results of the analysis pursued thus far in order to illuminate the literary and metaphysical relation between the shorter and longer segments of the text. We shall consider three such applications.

Among his introductory remarks to the entire treatise in chapter 1 Dionysius makes two points relevant to the structural interpretation of *DN*. First, he contrasts "intelligible" (νοητά)[112] with "sensible" (αἰσθητά)[113] divine names – examples of the former are Being, Life, and Wisdom and of the latter Fire, Eyes, and Crown[114] – and announces that the intelligible names will form the subject-matter of the present treatise.[115] Second, by speaking of the "beneficent processions" (ἀγαθουργοὶ πρόοδοι)[116] of the former and of the "stretching upward according to analogy" (ἀναλόγως ἀνατείνεσθαι)[117] of the latter, Dionysius aligns the intelligible and sensible names with the movements of procession and reversion respectively. If that is the emphasis here, then a further phase of procession encompasses the phases of remaining, procession, and reversion previously under discussion in this essay.

Chapter 2 of *DN* is particularly important from the methodological viewpoint, since Dionysius here explains the relation between the terms "union" (ἕνωσις) and "distinction" (διάκρισις) as applied to divine naming.[118] He shows that there are certain names with the prefix ὑπερ- or having a causal sense which indicate unification among the names themselves and others connoting activity which indicate distinction of the divine persons.[119] He next complicates the picture by saying that there are "specific unions and distinctions within the union and distinction aforesaid" (τῆς εἰρημένης ἑνώσεως . . . καὶ αὖθις τῆς διακρίσεως εἶναί τινας ἰδικὰς καὶ ἑνώσεις καὶ διακρίσεις).[120] This discussion reveals three things

112 *DN* 1. 8, 597 B (121. 4–13).

113 See *DN* 1. 8, 597 B (121. 6) for the former and *DN* 1. 4, 592 B-593 A (114. 1–115. 18) and *DN* 1. 8, 597 AB (120. 12–121. 3) for the latter. The sensible names are discussed more fully in Dionysius, *CH* 15. 1, 328A-15. 9, 340 B (50. 13–59. 13).

114 See *DN* 1. 6, 596 AB (118. 2–119. 5) for the former and *DN* 1. 8, 597 AB (120. 11–121. 3) for the latter.

115 *DN* 1. 8, 597 B (121. 4–8).

116 *DN* 1. 4, 589 D (112. 8–9).

117 *DN* 1. 4, 592 C (115. 8).

118 *DN* 2. 3, 640 B-2. 8, 645 D (125. 13–133. 4).

119 See *DN* 2. 3, 640 BC (125. 13–126. 2).

120 *DN* 2. 4, 640 D-641 A (126. 11–13). In all, Dionysius mentions four kinds of name in this passage: *1.* Names with the prefix u9per- which indicate unification among the names themselves (*DN* 2. 3, 640 B (125. 14–16) cf. 2. 5, 641 D-644A (128. 8 and 128. 16)), *2.* Names connoting activity which indicate distinction of the divine persons (*DN* 2. 3, 640 C (125. 19–126. 2) cf. 2. 5, 641 D (128. 8–13)), *3.* Names connoting processions which indicate distinction among the names themselves (*DN* 2. 4, 640 D-641 A (126. 10–11) cf. 2. 5, 641 D-644 A (128. 15–17)), *4.* Names in the contradictory form u9per-*x* + *x* which indicate unity of the godhead (*DN* 2. 4, 641

about the structure of *DN*. **[95]** First, it shows that there is a clear distinction between the intelligible names discussed in chapters 5–13 and the Trinitarian names discussed almost exclusively in chapter 3.[121] Second, it establishes the principle of distinguishing between what we have termed major phases and minor phases of procession (and therefore, presumably of remaining and reversion). Third, it introduces the name One at a point in the text where it can complete the circle left incomplete by the sequence of divine names between Being in chapter 5 and One in chapter 13.

Dionysius makes two further points relevant to the structural interpretation of *DN* among his remarks preliminary to the discussion of the name Good in chapter 3. First, he explains to his fellow presbyter Timothy that we must begin by invoking the Trinity which is the source of Good and superior to the Good and then puts this precept into the syntactic form of an injunction: "Let us stretch ourselves upward by prayers" (ἡμᾶς οὖν αυτοὺς ταῖς εὐχαῖς ἀνατείνωμεν).[122] Second, he alludes to the famous Homeric image of being on earth and pulling a shining chain hanging down from heaven where we "are in reality not drawing it down but we ourselves are being drawn up" (τῷ ὄντι δὲ οὐ κατήγομεν ἐκείνην . . . ἀλλ'αὐτοὶ ἡμεῖς ἀνηγόμεθα) in order to explain how we pray to God from our position in the **[96]** hierarchy.[123] Clearly, the overlapping between the major and minor phases of remaining, procession, and reversion which we have been discussing in this essay is founded on the ultimate inseparability of the downward and upward processes as such.

A (126. 15–16) cf. 2. 4, 641 C (128. 3)). The argument is problematic because Dionysius really seems to be talking about four modalities of God and the creature rather than four types of name. Here, we have *1*. Properties of the creature considered in transcendent form, *2*. Activities of the divine persons considered in immanent form, *3*. Creatures considered in themselves, and *4*. God considered in himself. Since there should really be no names of *4* at all, Dionysius is confusing the issue by inserting a more paradoxical version of name or a fusion of names *1* and *3* at this point in his scheme. Fortunately, the only aspect of this doctrine relevant to the present discussion is that of the different levels of union and distinction Translated into our terminology, type 4 represents the major union + minor union, type 2 the major union + minor distinction, type 3 the major distinction and minor distinction, and type 1 the major distinction and minor union. These four types constitute the logical-semantic structure known as the semiotic square as follows:

type 4 UNION (union)	type 2 UNION (distinction)
type 1 DISTINCTION (union)	type 3 DISTINCTION (distinction)

Metaphysically speaking, type 1 indicates the remaining of the names, type 2 the procession of the godhead, type 3 the procession of the names, and type 4 the remaining of the godhead.

121 With the exception of some comments in *DN* 13. 3, 980 D-981A (229. 6–14), Trinitarian names are largely ignored throughout chapters 5–13. I disagree with the thesis argued in Klitenic Wear and Dillon 2007, pp. 33–48 that Dionysius is interpreting the triad Being, Life, and Wisdom in a Trinitarian manner.

122 *DN* 3. 1, 680 C (138. 13).

123 *DN* 3. 2, 680C (139. 4). He also uses the image of being in a boat and pulling on a hawser attached to a rock.

We can conclude from these arguments that chapters 1–3 and the remainder of the treatise are distinguished primarily by the Trinitarian character of the former and the non-Trinitarian character of the latter.[124] The shorter segment is also demarcated from the longer by its emphasis upon the principles of divine naming and by the prominence accorded to the theory and practice of prayer.

Postscript

We are now approaching the end of our analysis of pseudo-Dionysius' *On Divine Names*. At times, this analysis has probably seemed to be over-complicated. Yet in retrospect, it now seems perhaps to have been rather simple. But if the latter is the case, why did previous readers of the text not explain it as we have done?

There are at least two answers to this question. First, there is the issue of translations of Dionysius' work. It is clear that the conceptual subtleties of Dionysius' writing are generally obscured by the translations used by most modern readers. However, a very close reading of the Greek text coupled with sensitivity to the meaning of technical terminology has made new conclusions possible. Second, there is the issue of Dionysius' own style of writing. Since this is as elaborate in its use of rhetorical effects as it is allusive with respect to philosophical concepts, it is often easy for the reader to overlook the most crucial turns in the argument. This aspect of Dionysius' style may have resulted from a strategy of concealing the debts to philosophy or from the evolution of the text itself through an increasingly convoluted series of revisions.

124 There is a reference to the Trinity in chapter 13 (at *DN* 13. 3, 980 D-981 A (229. 6–14)) and to Logos in chapter 7 (at *DN* 7. 4, 872 C (198. 21–199. 7)). However, the Trinity is not introduced as a major issue in either case.

7

ERIUGENA'S FOURFOLD CONTEMPLATION

[151] Since the fourfold division of Nature has always been the most noticeable doctrine in Iohannes Scottus Eriugena's *Periphyseon* and has even occasioned the bestowal upon the work of that title by which it has frequently been known (*De Divisione Naturae*), one is hesitant to thematize it yet again. However, in considering the celebrated division specifically from the viewpoint of Eriugena's putative "Idealism," it is perhaps possible to generate some new insights. Let us recall the teaching briefly. Eriugena maintains that Nature is divisible into four species: first, that which creates and is not created (*quae creat et non creatur*) – corresponding to God as beginning of all things; second, that which is created and creates (*quae et creatur et creat*) – equivalent to the primordial causes – ; third, that which is created and does not create (*quae creatur et non creat*) – equivalent to the effects of the primordial causes; and fourth, that which does not create and is not created (*quae nec creat nec creatur*) – corresponding to God as end of all things. This fourfold division represents the conceptual armature of Eriugena's systematic and narrative account of reality. It is summarized at the beginning of book I, which deals with the first species; enumerated again at the beginning of book II, which is devoted **[152]** to the second species; summarized briefly at the beginning of book III and more fully halfway through the book, where the treatment of the third species commences in detail; enumerated again at the beginning of book IV, where the detailed treatment of the fourth species begins and more briefly halfway through the book; and finally summarized at the conclusion of book V.[1]

Obviously, the Eriugenian fourfold division is an example of the generalized structure formed by the combination of two pairs of opposites: in this case specifically opposites related as affirmative and negative and as active and passive

1 Eriugena: *Periphyseon* (henceforth *"PP")* I. 441A–442A; II. 523D–529A; III. 619A–622A; III. 688D–690A; IV. 741C–744A; IV. 860B-C; V. 1019A–1020A. My discussion is based on the following edition: *Iohannis Scotti seu Eriugenae Periphyseon,* ed. Edouard Jeauneau, Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis CLXI–CLXV (Turnhout: Brepols, 1996–2003). I have also consulted I. P. Sheldon-Williams, ed., *Iohannis Scotti Eriugenae Periphyseon (De Divisione Naturae)*, Book I (Dublin: Institute for Advanced Studies, 1968), Book II (Dublin 1970) – the continuation of this edition was by I. P. Sheldon-Williams and J. J. O'Meara, Book III (Dublin: Institute for Advanced Studies, 1981), and by É. Jeauneau, Book IV (Dublin, 1995).

respectively.[2] I believe that it is most useful to examine this structure from three viewpoints which might be labelled the "logical," the "arithmetical," and the "idealistic." These viewpoints are proposed in a historically sensitive as well as conceptually abstract manner given that they correspond broadly with the three groups of sources from which Eriugena evolved, even if he did not simply derive, his doctrine. However, my purpose in suggesting consideration of the fourfold structure from the "logical," the "arithmetical," and the "idealistic" viewpoints is primarily philosophical rather than historiographic. Moreover, the most interesting feature of such an investigation would be perhaps not the isolation of the three viewpoints in relation to the quadripartition but the study of their mutual interaction.

It is widely assumed that one inspiration for the Eriugenian fourfold division was the Latin tradition of Aristotelian logical theory. In order to explain the distinction between substance and accident which forms the foundation of this theory, four classes are articulated: that which is of a subject but not in a subject – i.e. universal substances; that which is not in a subject and not of a subject – i.e. individual substances; that which is in a subject and of a subject – i.e. universal accidents; and that which is in a subject but not of a subject – i.e. individual accidents. Application to terms of the generalized structure formed by the combination of two pairs of opposites is paralleled by application to propositions. In order to explain the interrelation between propositions which grounds the possibility of immediate inference, four types are distinguished: that which is universal and affirmative – e.g. "every pleasure is a good" – ; that which is universal and negative – e.g. "every pleasure is not a good" – ; that which is particular and affirmative – e.g. "some pleasure is a good" – ; and that which is particular and negative – e.g. "some pleasure is not a good." Eriugena knew the categorial theory through the pseudo-Augustinian *Categoriae Decem* and possibly through Boethius' translation and commentary on Aristotle's *Categories*.[3] He knew the

2 The fourfold division of Nature has been discussed in almost every major study of Eriugena's thought (these discussions being by now necessarily somewhat repetitive). However, among studies mentioning unusual features see Giulio d'Onofrio, "Über die Natur der Einteilung. Die dialektische Entfaltung von Eriugenas Denken," in *Begriff und Metapher: Sprachform des Denkens bei Eriugena*, ed. Werner Beierwaltes (Heidelberg: Winter, 1990), pp. 17–38. On the elusive question of direct sources see Brian Stock, "In search of Eriugena's Augustine," in *Eriugena, Studien zu Seinen Quellen*, ed. Werner Beierwaltes (Heidelberg: Winter, 1980), pp. 85–104; Dominic J. O'Meara, "The Concept of 'Natura' in John Scottus Eriugena (De Divisione Naturae, Book 1)," *Vivarium* 19 (1981), pp. 126–142; Gustavo Piemonte, "L'expression 'quae sunt et quae non sunt'. Jean Scot et Marius Victorinus," in *Jean Scot écrivain*, ed. Guy-H. Alland (Montréal-Paris: Bellarmin-Vrin, 1986), pp. 81–113. On the parallel with the modern theory of the semiotic square see Alain de Libera, "La sémiotique d'Aristote," in *Structures élémentaires de la signification*, ed. Frédéric Nef (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1976), pp. 28–48, Stephen Gersh, *Concord in Discourse: Harmonics and Semiotics in Late Classical and Early Medieval Platonism* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1996), pp. 69–73 and 166–77.

3 ps. Augustine, *Categoriae Decem* 31. 140.10–141.9 and Boethius, *In Categorias* 1. 169B ff., 1.175B-C.

propositional theory through Martianus Capella's *De Nuptiis* **[153]** *Philologiae et Mercurii* and perhaps through Apuleius' *Perihermenias* and Boethius' translation of Aristotle's *De Interpretatione*.[4]

That Eriugena understands his fourfold division in terms of logical theory or – to be more precise – using the analogy of logical theory is revealed by close inspection of the presentation of the beginning of book II. Here, Eriugena describes the complementary processes utilized by dialecticians whereby genera are divided into species and species into individuals and whereby individuals are resolved into species and species into genera. The former process – called "division" (*divisio*) has already yielded the four species. The latter process – called "analytic" (*analutikē*) – becomes the subject of an extended discussion in which it is explained that the first species and the fourth species can be resolved into one form, these being separated in our perception when we contemplate God as beginning of all things or as end of all things, but not separated in God. Moreover, the second species and the third species can be resolved similarly in that both are contained within the genus of creature, while the forms produced by the resolution of each pair of species can be resolved similarly in that the creature participates in the creator.[5]

Another inspiration for the Eriugenian fourfold division was undoubtedly the Latin tradition of Pythagorean arithmetical theory. It had been the custom of these theorists to arrange the numbers 1 to 9 whose properties are of special significance into the following four classes: that which generates and is not generated – the numbers 1, 2, 3, and 5 – ; that which is generated and generates – the number 4 – ; that which is generated and does not generate – the numbers 6, 8, and 9 – ; and that which does not generate and is not generated – the number 7. Eriugena would have known this arithmetical theory through Macrobius' *Commentarius in Somnium Scipionis* and Martianus Capella's *De Nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*, although neither source presents a complete statement.[6]

That Eriugena understands his fourfold division in terms of arithmetical theory or – again to be more precise – using the analogy of arithmetical theory is revealed by careful examination of two types of argument. The first elaborates a certain parallelism between the relation of the monad to the number-series and the relation of Nature to its four species. It is illustrated in the earlier part of book III where the philosopher argues that the monad is the beginning and the end of the number series, that the numbers are simultaneously eternal and made, and that the numbers are understood as unfolded in their series but above understanding as pre-existent in the monad,[7] while **[154]** also maintaining that God is the beginning and the end of all things as the first and fourth species, that the primordial causes

4 Apuleius, *Perihermeneias* 5. 86–8; Martianus Capella, *De Nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*, ed. J. Willis (Leipzig: Teubner, 1983) IV. 400–401; Boethius: *Versio Aristotelis De Interpretatione* 9. 11–13.

5 Eriugena, *PP* II.523D–529A.

6 Macrobius, *Commentarius in Somnium Scipionis*, ed. J. Willis (Leipzig: Teubner, 1970) I. 5.16; Martianus Capella: *De Nupt*. VII. 738.

7 Eriugena: *PP* III. 652B ff., 655C, 659A-B.

are simultaneously eternal as the second and made as the third species, and that the primordial causes are understood as unfolded in their series but above understanding as pre-existent in God.[8] The second type of argument establishes a certain association between particular members of the number series and particular species of Nature. One example occurs in the center of book III where Eriugena's discussion marks its transition from the second to the third species with an excursus on the number 6 as embodied in the *Genesis* account of the creation of visible things.[9] Another illustration is found at the end of book V where the discussion marks its transition into the fourth species with references to the number 8 as contained in the subtitle of the sixth psalm *David pro octava*.[10]

The idealistic element in Eriugena's fourfold division can be noted more briefly, since it has been thoroughly explored in earlier scholarship. The presentation at the beginning of book II amounts to a clear statement, for when the writer explains that the first and fourth species are separated in our perception when we contemplate God as beginning and end of all things but not separated in God, while the second and third species are both separated and not separated in the nature of created things, the possibility of constituting reality through intellection is raised. The most overt "idealistic" features of this discussion are perhaps the characterization of each phase in the process as a "contemplation" (*contemplatio, theoria*) or as a "consideration" (*consideratio*),[11] the problematization of the relation between subjectivity and objectivity indicated in the resolution of the first and fourth species, the notion of relative degrees of subjectivity and objectivity suggested by a contrast between the respective modes of resolution of the two pairs, and the characterization of certain phases in the process alternatively as a "relation" (*habitudo*) and an "intention" (*intentio*).[12] Eriugena's further accounts of the fourfold division reiterate the idealistic elements. In the center of book III he explains that God is the beginning, middle, and end of the universe not in the sense that these are three things but in the sense that there is a "threefold motion of theological contemplation" (*theologiae contemplationis triplex motus*).[13] As the text now reminds us, we are here talking of the first species, the intermediary between the first and fourth species, and the fourth species of the fourfold division. Moreover, it is "in a double mode with respect to its contemplators" (*duplici modo contemplatoribus suis*) that the middle phase of God's engagement with the universe appears.[14] The account of the fourfold division concluding book V has similarly idealistic features. For instance, in describing God as the **[155]** beginning and end of the things, we are not dividing his indivisible nature but

8 *PP* III. 638B ff., 650C, 692B-C. These views are reiterated in many other passages of *Periphyseon*.
9 *PP* III. 688A – 689C.
10 *PP* V. 1020B ff.
11 *PP* II. 523D, 524D, 527B, 528A.
12 *PP* II. 527B and 528A.
13 *PP* III. 688B.
14 *PP* III. 689A.

approaching him in the "mode of a twofold contemplation" (*duplicis theoriae modus*).[15] Eriugena's idealistic propensity is derived neither from the Aristotelian logical nor from he Pythagorean arithmetical tradition. Rather, it is the outcome of his readings in Greek patristics: Pseudo-Dionysius, Gregory of Nyssa, and Maximus Confessor.

The foregoing remarks constitute a preliminary sketch of Eriugena's fourfold division of Nature considered from the three viewpoints – logical, arithmetical, and idealistic – which seem to provide the greatest possibilities of illumination. In order to complete the picture, it is necessary to consider the logical, arithmetical, and idealistic contexts and especially the association between the logical and the idealistic and between the arithmetical and the idealistic contexts with respect to Eriugenian philosophy in general. The logical context and the relation between the logical and the idealistic contexts have already been studied extensively in the literature and especially by German writers influenced by the more recent idealistic tradition. In our own time, Werner Beierwaltes would be an outstanding example of this tendency. However, the arithmetical context and the relation between the arithmetical and the idealistic contexts have probably on account of the pressures of disciplinary specialization escaped the attention of scholars. An attempt at filling this lacuna, even in a modest way, therefore seems worthwhile. The reflections to follow can be classified under two headings: first, discussion of Eriugena's understanding of ideas, of numbers, and of the relation between ideas and numbers; second, discussion of the implications for philosophy of the divergence between the cognitive and the interpretative which Eriugena's understandings suggest. In the former case, we shall present a fairly exhaustive documentation. In the latter, we shall be content to suggest some potentially productive lines of research.

The essence of Eriugena's idealism might be captured in the statement: "production is thinking." However, the meaning of this formula has to be specified by saying, in the first place, that thinking here represents cognition. As a writer in the Platonic tradition, Eriugena holds that the intellective can be distinguished from the sensitive, that the former is superior to the latter – a relation frequently characterized as that of higher to lower or of interior to exterior – , and that the former controls the latter. Therefore, the thinking which constitutes production is cognitive thinking.

The meaning of the formula should be specified further in terms of the relation between production and thinking. It seems that Eriugena had **[156]** subconsciously grasped the argument of earlier idealism – elaborated carefully by Plotinus as a critique of Aristotelianism but largely forgotten by the Christian Neoplatonists who followed – that thinking necessarily implies duality. The consequence for him is a regress in the notion that production is equivalent to thinking for, if being a thinker necessarily implies having an object of thought, to declare that a thinker

15 *PP* V. 1019A.

produces an object of thought is to assert that the thinker has already produced an object of thought before it produces the object of thought, and so on. The regressive nature of the theory becomes apparent when we study what thinkers and what objects of thought Eriugena envisages.

Among the thinkers described in *Periphyseon* there is God himself. He "makes by knowing and knows by making" (*cognoscendo facit et faciendo cognoscit*).[16] Man similarly has a mind whose thinking corresponds to production of things. This emerges from the philosophical explanation of the Bible's account of Adam naming the animals where it is argued that created things exist more truly in man's notions of them than in themselves[17] and that man's notions are equivalent to both the substances and the accidents of things in themselves,[18] this priority of the "notion" (*notio, notitia*) over the "reality" (*res*) and this equivalence between the notion and the reality constituting two phases of a single ideal-real process of emanation. Among the thinkers described in Eriugena's treatise, there is also the angel. The point is less emphatic given that such a mind is said to contain only a "definition" (*diffinitio*) of other things and that the teaching is attributed to Augustine.[19]

But since these thinkers are also objects of thought – in other words, they think and produce each other – the regress in the notion of thinking begins to emerge. It is because God produces man by thinking him that Eriugena can propose as his definition of the latter "a certain intellectual concept made eternally in the divine mind" (*notio quaedam intellectualis in mente divina aeternaliter facta*).[20] Thus, man is an object of thought. In a passage which we shall examine in more detail later, the philosopher argues that a man produces another man, that a man produces an angel, and that an angel produces another angel when these minds enter into mutual understanding.[21] The scriptural text "who made the heavens in his intellect" (*qui fecit caelos in intellectu*) is referred by Eriugena to God's production of the angels by thinking them. In other words, angel is also an object of thought.[22]

These, then, are examples of thinkers who turn out to be objects of thought. There are also examples of objects of thought which turn out to be thinkers.

[157] The objects of thought described in *Periphyseon* exhibit a considerable variety. Among them is the fourfold division of Nature which constitutes the framework of the entire text and which in different passages is said to be the

16 *PP* II. 559B. Cf. *PP* III. 704B, IV. 766B.

17 *PP* IV. 774A.

18 *PP* IV. 769A. Cf. *PP* IV. 766A.

19 *PP* I. 485C. Cf. *PP* IV. 773A-B.

20 *PP* IV. 768B. Cf. *PP* IV. 770B. On this doctrine see Dermot Moran, "'Officina omnium' or 'Notio quaedam intellectualis in mente divina aeternaliter facta'," in *L'homme et son univers au moyen âge* 1, ed. Christian Wenin (Louvain-la-Neuve: Institut Supérieur de Philosophie), 195–204, Carlos Steel, "La création de l'univers dans l'homme selon Jean Scot Érigène," in Wenin, *L'homme et son univers*, 205–210.

21 *PP* IV. 780A ff.

22 *PP* IV. 779D-780A.

object of God's thinking and of man's thinking.[23] The complex relation between the second and third species of Nature is sometimes characterized as the relation between primordial causes in themselves and primordial causes as unfolded in created things and also sometimes characterized as the relation between created things as pre-contained in primordial causes and created things in themselves.[24] Either way, the divine names, numbers, and creaturely forms which represent differing specifications of this emanation are described as objects not only of the divine but of the human mind.[25] Also among the objects of thought described in *Periphyseon* is the sixfold repetition of days. This constitutes the real mediator within the fourfold division of Nature and is in different passages said to be the object of God's thinking and of man's thinking.[26] The situations regarding place and matter are particularly noteworthy. For Eriugena, place is reducible to any boundary which encloses[27] and matter to the combination of incorporeal qualities.[28] Both are therefore transformed from objects of sense to objects of thought.

Now if these objects of thought were also thinkers – that is, in the sense of thinking and producing each other – the regress in the notion of thinking would again occur. This conclusion is not drawn as frequently as is its converse. Nevertheless, a passage dealing with God's creation of the primordial causes in his wisdom states clearly that these causes "not only know themselves but do not lack knowledge concerning those things of which they are causes" (*non solum se ipsa cognoscere, sed et rerum quarum principia sunt notitia non carere*).[29]

Given that the essence of Eriugena's idealism can be captured in the statement "production is thinking," there is one final precision. Here, the meaning of the formula has to be specified by saying that production represents creation. This would seem to open the possibility of applying to thinking the fourfold structure formed by the combination of affirmative and negative and of active and passive which is applied to creation. Perhaps realizing that certain inconsistencies would result from such an application, Eriugena holds back.

In turning to the question of arithmetic – especially the understanding of the nature of number – it is particularly important to view Eriugena in the historical context. The medieval liberal art of arithmetic was heavily influenced by the Pythagorean tradition and can, for purposes of analysis, be **[158]** divided into a more philosophical tradition i.e. discussion of the nature of number and a more practical tradition i.e. discussion of the rules of computation. The former tradition leads to two kinds of philosophical reflection: an ontological-epistemological arithmetic where the eternal or a priori status of numbers is the issue, and an

23 *PP* II. 624A–625A, 658A.
24 For a good example of this way of thinking see *PP* IV. 770D–771A.
25 *PP* III. 658A, 661B-C (divine names); IV. 768C–769B, 772A, 773D–774C ff. (creaturely forms).
26 *PP* III. 690A, IV. 781A–782D, 783A–785C.
27 *PP* I. 474B–504A.
28 *PP* I. 495B ff., 458B–503D.
29 *PP* II. 552B. Cf. *PP* 558b–559A.

exegetical arithmetic where the symbolic properties of numbers are explored and manipulated. The practical tradition leads to the codification of rules for using the abacus, and so forth.[30] In order to understand Eriugena's use of arithmetic, we can ignore the practical side completely. However, it is useful to consider his approach in terms of both the ontological-epistemological and the exegetical aspects of philosophical arithmetic.[31] The following remarks will therefore be divided into (i) comments on the metaphysical status of numbers and (ii) comments on the exegetical usage of numbers.

Among Eriugena's discussions of the metaphysical status of numbers perhaps the most important is that in which he exploits the analogy between number and the primordial causes. A major philosophical problem associated with the systematic unfolding of Nature in the treatise *Periphyseon* concerns the relation between eternity and time in the first three species, since we are forced into the paradoxical position of maintaining that the primordial causes are simultaneously uncreated and eternal as pre-contained within God, created and temporal as unfolded in the creature, and of ambivalent status when considered in themselves.[32] Eriugena believes that reflection on the nature of number shows how all this is possible. In fact, the study of arithmetic makes clear that numbers are "eternal" (*aeterni*) since the number-series exists eternally in the monad and the monad in the number-series, the monad being the source of their stability.[33] The study of arithmetic also reveals that numbers are "made" (*facti*) given that the number-series proceeds from and reverts to the monad, the numbers being potentially in the monad and actually in themselves.[34] This argument showing that numbers are simultaneously eternal and made is a piece of pure Pythagoreanism drawn from the major Latin transmitters of that tradition: Augustine and Boethius. From the former, Eriugena extracts other arithmetical doctrines such as the theory of eight levels of number in *De Musica*: two below the soul – corporeal and sensory numbers – , five within the soul – encountering, progressive, memorial, rational, and intellectual numbers – , and one above the soul – supra-intellectual numbers.[35] From the latter, Eriugena adopts various arithmetical teachings such as the numbers' derivation of all evenness from the dyad and all oddness from the triad; the classification of

30 On the distinctions between various traditions of medieval arithmetic, see William F. Hopper, *Medieval Number Symbolism: Its Sources, Meaning, and Influence in Thought and Expression* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1938), pp. 78 ff., Michael Masi, "Arithmetic," in *The Seven Liberal Arts in the Middle Ages*, ed. David L. Wagner (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), pp. 147–168.

31 Eriugena distinguishes the numbers of computation (numbers "which" (*quos*) we count) and metaphysical numbers (numbers "according to which" (*secundum quos*) we count) at *PP* III. 651A-B. On Eriugena's use of numbers, see Dominic J. O'Meara, "The Metaphysical Use of Mathematical Concepts in Eriugena," in Beierwaltes, *Begriff und Metapher*, pp. 142–148.

32 Discussion of this question begins at *PP* III. 638B.

33 *PP* III. 652B ff.

34 *PP* III. 656D ff.

35 *PP* IV. 731D–732A. Cf. *PP* IV. 786C ff.

ratios into multiple, superparticular, multiple superparticular, and **[159]** multiple superpartient; and the derivation of proportionalities.[36] Finally, the study of arithmetic makes clear that numbers are eternal and made in an epistemological sense. When the numbers are made by proceeding from and reverting to the monad in an ordered series, this represents a process whereby they "become manifest to minds in precise distinctions of limits" (*intellectibus manifesti fieri certis terminorum distinctionibus*).[37]

The connection between what we have termed the metaphysical status and what we have termed the exegetical usage of numbers is indicated by Eriugena himself in noting the agreement of Pythagoras and Scripture.[38]

Among instances of the exegetical usage of numbers by Eriugena, one might cite those passages in which, to employ the nomenclature of the later theorist Hugh of St. Victor, he interprets numbers "according to the multitude of parts" (*secundum multitudinem partium*).[39] In one case, the number 6 signifies the procession of all things from the divine cause, having been attached to the days of creation in the book of *Genesis*. Since this number was chosen by the sacred writers on account of its perfection – its divisors 3, 2, 1, when added together, precisely equal the number – Eriugena is here also illustrating the application "according to addition of parts" (*secundum partium aggregationem*).[40] Elsewhere in *Periphyseon*, we find various numbers signifying the division of man: 6 signifies his division into bodily form, vital motion, exterior sense, interior sense, reason, and intellect;[41] 8 signifies the Augustinian hierarchy of faculties mentioned above; and 10 signifies man's division into the four material elements, the form containing them, the vital motion, the twofold sense, reason, and intellect.[42] In another case, the number 8 signifies the return of all things to the divine cause, having been applied to the end of time in the book of *Psalms*. Given that this number was chosen by the sacred author because of its geometrical properties – it represents the number of angles in the mystical cube – , Eriugena is now also illustrating the application "according to form of disposition" (*secundum formam dispositionis*).[43] Among instances of the exegetical usage of numbers in Eriugena one might also cite those passages where, continuing to employ the twelfth-century technical nomenclature, he interprets numbers "according to mode of extension" (*secundum modum porrectionis*). In one case, the number 10 signifies the restored state of created

36 *PP* III. 654A–655B.

37 *PP* III. 657C–658A, 658D–659A, 661A-C.

38 *PP* III. 652A.

39 See Hugh of St. Victor, *De Scripturis et Scriptoribus Sacris*, Patrologia Latina 175, 22–23. Hugh lists nine applications of "mystical" (*mystici*) i.e. symbolic numbers and is codifying exegetical methods which have been in use for centuries.

40 Eriugena: *PP* III. 655C – 656C.

41 *PP* IV. 824C–825C. For the perfection of the number 6 as applied to man see also *PP* IV. 780C-D, 785D–786A.

42 *PP* V. 873D–874B.

43 *PP* V. 1020A–1021B.

things since the number 1, representing humanity, is added to the number 9, representing the angels. This arithmetical operation is described in the parable of the lost drachma.[44]

It is important to realize that when we talk about the metaphysical status of numbers or about the exegetical usage of numbers in Eriugena's text, we are **[160]** not dealing with two completely unrelated phenomena. The respective types of number are equally liable to misinterpretation by a modern reader who might believe that discourse about numbers is in the former context exact and therefore profound and in the latter simplistic and accordingly naive. When Eriugena discusses the metaphysical status of numbers, he is using the term "number" not in a literal but in a metaphorical sense, and when he elaborates the exegetical usage of numbers, he is using the term "number" not in a literal but in a symbolic sense. Since metaphor and symbol are intimately connected with one another, the contexts for the discussion of number must also be understood in their proximity. Many texts in *Periphyseon* reveal the true nature of what is numerical. When reporting the Biblical measurements of Noah's ark, Eriugena points out that, if an object measuring 300 × 50 × 30 cubits can be described as containing 7 pairs each of clean animals and 2 pairs each of the unclean together with Noah and his family, the power of God and the reason of natural things is more capacious than something contrived by human thought.[45] Elsewhere, Eriugena notes that the various enumerations of psychic parts do not really divide the soul which is omnipresent.[46] A very noticeable aspect of the employment of number in the analysis of real things is the combination of many different and even incompatible sets of numbers in the same context: this is, illustrated, for example, by the division of the return into three modes, of the third mode into seven stages and eight points between stages, and of the eight points into a group of five and a group of three. All this shows that the numerical is to be conceived in a flexible rather than a rigid manner.[47]

The essence of Eriugena's idealism has been expressed in the statement "production is thinking." His arithmetic has been studied from the complementary viewpoints of the metaphysical status and of the exegetical usage of numbers. Does Eriugena maintain a conscious link between idealism and arithmetic? If so, what precisely is the nature of this link? These questions can be answered decisively by examining two texts: the first from his *Periphyseon* and the second from his *Expositiones super Ierarchiam Caelestem*.

44 *PP* V. 1005D. Symbolic applications of the number 10 to created things also include an example where it is divided not into 9 + 1 but 5 + 5. This is the interpretation of the parable of the wise and foolish virgins at *PP* V. 1011A-B. Cf. also *PP* V. 1006A where the number 10 is squared in order to produce more symbolic references.

45 *PP* III. 724B-C.

46 *PP* IV. 786C ff.

47 *PP* V. 1020A ff. This flexibility is necessary given that numbers in their highest mode transcend nature and being and are contemplated only by the highest faculty. See *PP* V. 965D–966A.

The passage in *Periphyseon* combines a discussion of idealism in relation to men and angels with the consideration of a simple arithmetical example: the properties of the number 6. It starts from the exegetical problem of why Augustine in his interpretation of the six days of creation as six phases of angelic contemplation, by placing the creation of angels on the first day and the creation of men on the sixth, seems to assign a priority to the angels which contradicts the teaching of certain Greek Fathers. Eriugena's initial response is **[161]** that both men and angels should be understood under the vague term "light" applied to the initial creation.[48] This solution is then justified by examining successively the relation between man and angel, the relation between man and man, and the relation between man and the number 6. In the first place, the angelic essence is established in the human as much as the human essence is established in the angelic "since it is made in everything which its pure intellect knows most perfectly and is unified with it" (*in omni siquidem, quodcunque purus intellectus perfectissime cognoscit, fit, eique unum efficitur*).[49] The principle that a mind is made in that which it understands – provided that the understanding is pure – is further elaborated in Eriugena's second point. When two men enter into a discussion the same thing occurs: when I understand what you understand, I am made in your understanding, and when you understand what I understand, you are made in my understanding.[50] A third conclusion emerges from the illustration of the principle just described in terms of arithmetic. This example shows not only that each man's intellect contains the number 6 when it comprehends the proposition that the number 6 is equal to the sum of its divisors but that the number 6 contains each man's intellect because 6 represents a perfection of number as man represents a perfection of creation and because the number 6 embraces the earlier numbers and man's nature embraces the earlier creation.[51] These three arguments show that both men and angels should be understood under the loose term "light" applied in *Genesis* to the initial creation. On this basis, the philosopher can go on to argue that the six days of creation are six phases of human contemplation and also six levels of human nature.[52]

By speaking of understanding on the part of pure intellect as something which preceded the fall and reappears with the saints, the passage we have been considering reveals an eschatological tendency. This becomes more pronounced in the next case.

A passage in the *Expositiones in Ierarchiam Caelestem* combines a discussion of idealism in relation to angels with the consideration of a more complex arithmetical example: the properties of the tetractys 6:8:9:12. Here, the starting point is pseudo-Dionysius' account of the hierarchy of angelic intellects which – if we read the text in conjunction with the *Periphyseon* – is also an account of reciprocal understanding and making, and Eriugena elaborates on the argument by introducing

48 *PP* IV. 781A–782A.
49 *PP* IV. 780A-B. Cf. *PP* IV. 780D, 783A.
50 *PP* IV. 780B-C.
51 *PP* IV. 780C-D, 782C-D, 785D.
52 *PP* IV. 782B–785C.

supplementary scientific and scriptural allusions.[53] It is Boethius' *De Arithmetica* which supplies a complex doctrine about the perfect harmony. Since the hierarchy of angels is divided according to a square number (9 being the first square of an odd number) and also **[162]** visualized as a solid cube, it is possible to discover there all the properties of this solid: geometrically speaking, it contains the number 6 on its surface, the number 8 in its angles, and the number 12 on its sides;[54] and harmonically speaking, it contains the consonance of the fourth between the 8 and the 6, the consonance of the fifth between the 9 and the 6, and the consonance of the octave between the difference between the 12 and the 8 and the difference between the 8 and the 6.[55] It is the book of *Daniel* which confirms the doctrine of perfect harmony with revelation. Since there are 10,000 × 10,000 angels standing around the throne of the Ancient of Days, it is clear that the hierarchy of angels is divided according to a number visualized as a cube (the highest such number intelligible to man).[56] Of course, the actual numbers applicable to the angelic orders transcend both angelic and human understanding: at least until we enter into that "mystical solid" (*soliditas mystica*) revealed to us by Christ's resurrection on the 8th day.[57] Nevertheless, whatever is taught regarding cubic proportions and proportionalities "has entered the understanding of human intellects from no other source than the unions of celestial essences" (*non aliunde nisi ex celestium essentiarum adunationibus . . . in noticiam humanorum intellectuum provenire*).[58]

From the sketch which we have undertaken of Eriugena's understanding of ideas, of numbers, and of the relation between ideas and numbers, it is possible to draw two immediate conclusions.

First, there is envisaged the closest relation between ideas and numbers. On the one hand, various subjects produce by thinking: for example, God, man, angel. Moreover, that which thinks and produces does so numerically: for example, man in relation to the prefect number 6. The various subjects also become objects. For instance, man is produced by God's thinking. On the other hand, various objects are produced by thinking, for example, the division of Nature, the primordial causes, the division of days. Moreover, that which is thought and produced arises numerically: for example, the fourfold of the species of Nature and the sixfold of the intelligible days. The various objects also become subjects. For instance, the primordial causes produce by thinking their effects.

Second, a distinction between two types of numbers emerges in theory and practice. From one viewpoint, numbers are understood in terms of their metaphysical

53 *Expositiones in Ierarchiam Coelestem*, ed. J. Barbet, Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis XXXI (Turnhout: Brepols, 1975), 6. 152–198.

54 *Exp*. 6. 167–179. Cf. Boethius: *De Institutione Arithmetica*, ed. G. Friedlein (Leipzig, 1867) 11. 48–54.

55 *Exp*. 6. 179–194.

56 *Exp*. 14. 1–63. Cf. *Daniel* 7. 9–10.

57 *Exp*. 14. 11–24. Cf. 6. 183.

58 *Exp*. 6. 194–199.

status: for example, they proceed from and revert to the monad in a process which is both ontological and epistemological. But the term "number" cannot be divided precisely into a metaphorical and a literal sense. Moreover, the essence of number transcends human understanding. This **[163]** means that the present viewpoint regarding the notion of "number" cannot be separated from another. From this viewpoint, numbers are applied for exegetical purposes: for example, they can signify in themselves and in relation to one another. Alternatively, they can signify in terms of their arithmetical or their geometrical properties.

From these immediate conclusions, one may pass to further conclusions regarding Eriugenian thought in general. In my opinion the most important conclusion is that the medieval philosopher reveals in his writing a tension between a predominantly *cognitive* made of thought – an approach which privileges the theoretical, the univocal, and the atemporal and operates according to traditional Platonic criteria – and a predominantly *interpretative* mode of thought – an approach which privileges the practical, the polysemous, and the temporal and anticipates the post-Heideggerian critical mentality. The pivot on which this tension between the cognitive and the interpretative rests is undoubtedly the role of number.

Ernst Cassirer's *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* contains important discussions of the distinction between the empirical and the mythical consciousness and of the functions of the spatial, the temporal, and the numerical in the respective domains.[59] Turning to number, Cassirer characterizes the distinction as being between an "empirical" conception whereby numbers differ among themselves only according to their position in the system and where numbers are essentially explanatory in function, and a "mythical" conception whereby numbers differ among themselves according to their individual properties and where numbers are primarily significatory in function. Cassirer also observes that during the evolution of Western thought, there has been a gradual transition from the mythical to the empirical treatment of number, although at many periods of history the two approaches can be found to coexist in the same general system of thought.

This analysis clearly has some applicability to Eriugena's arithmetical thinking. What Cassirer terms the empirical view of number would have been familiar to Eriugena but would not have interested him. What Cassirer terms the mythical view of number corresponds to that exegetical usage of number which we have attempted to study in this essay. Midway between what Cassirer terms the empirical view of number and what he terms the mythical view of number lies the metaphysical understanding of number which we have also attempted to study. Undoubtedly, the juxtaposition of Eriugena and Cassirer also reveals historical and conceptual limits in the latter's approach. Nevertheless, it indicates the continuing relevance to philosophy not only **[164]** of Eriugena's arithmetical thinking in general but also of his arithmetico-idealistic tendency in particular.

59 Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, transl. R. Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955–1957), part 2, chapt. 2/5, 140–150.

8

ERIUGENA AND THE ORDER OF THE PRIMORDIAL CAUSES[1]

[83] The *Periphyseōn* of Iohannes Scottus Eriugena is a dialogue between a teacher and a student that attempts to study "in a logical progression" (*rationabili progressione*)[2] the four species of Nature: Creating and Not Created, Created and Creating, Created and Not Creating, and Not Creating and Not Created that had been distinguished at the beginning of the work.[3] At the point where the logical transition begins between the discussion of the second species of Created and Creating Nature – the primordial causes – and that of the third species of Created and Not Creating Nature – the effects of the primordial causes – the student raises an important question.

But before you come to consider the effects of the primordial causes from which especially the primal and unitary creative cause of all things is accustomed to be named, it would be fitting to know the natural order of those causes. For I think that we have been referring to them so far in a **[84]** confused and indistinct manner. If I am not mistaken, it will be of no small assistance to investigators in gaining a perfect knowledge of those causes and their effects, if the natural order in which they were established by their creator is first clearly disclosed.[4]

The teacher begins his reply by noting that the "sequence of the primordial causes" (*primordialium causarum series*) has been set out very clearly by Saint Dionysius the Areopagite[5] – that "skilled investigator of divine providence"

1 This essay is a modified and expanded version of a text that appeared in French in a special issue of *Les études philosophiques: Érigène*, 2013, pp. 57–78.

2 Eriugena: *Periph.* III. 620A-B (42–43).

3 *Periph.* I. 441B-442A (19–26). Not surprisingly, this division of nature has been extensively discussed by modern scholars. For a recent treatment, see Stephen Gersh: "Eriugena's Fourfold Contemplation. Idealism and Arithmetic," in *Eriugena, Berkeley, and the Idealist Tradition*, eds. Stephen Gersh and Dermot Moran (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), pp. 151–167.

4 *Periph.* III. 622A-B (125–132) *Sed priusquam ad considerandos effectus primordialium causarum ex quibus maxime prima omnium et una creatrix causa solet denominari accedas, ordinem naturalem earum nosse convenit. Adhuc enim mixtim indistincteque introductas esse arbitror. Nam, ni fallor, ad earum effectuumque suorum perfectam notitiam non mediocre auxilium quaerentibus praestabit, si prius naturalis ordo, quo a creatore conditae sunt, luculenter patefactus fuerit*.

5 For a general account of the doctrine of primordial causes in Eriugena, see Gangolf Schrimpf, *Das Werk des Johannes Scottus Eriugena im Rahmen des Wissenschaftsverständisses seiner Zeit. Eine*

(*divinae providentiae sollers investigator*) – in his book *On the Divine Names*.[6] He then provides an enumeration of these causes in which fifteen terms derived from Dionysius' treatise:[7]

1 "Goodness" (*bonitas*)
2 "Being" (*essentia*)
3 "Life" (*vita*)
4 "Reason" (*ratio*)
5 "Intelligence" (*intelligentia*)
6 "Wisdom" (*sapientia*)
7 "Power" (*virtus*)
8 "Blessedness" (*beatitudo*)
9 "Truth" (*veritas*)
10 "Eternity" (*aeternitas*)
11 "Greatness" (*magnitudo*)
12 "Love" (*amor*)
13 "Peace" (*pax*) **[85]**
14 "Unity" (*unitas*)
15 "Perfection" (*perfectio*)

intersect with *three* terms drawn from three sets of alternative terms also having Dionysian provenance:[8]

A "supreme and true *x*" (*summa ac vera*), or "*x* through itself" (*per se ipsam*), or "not participating" (*nullius particeps*);
B "*x* through itself" (*per se ipsam*), or "first participation in [*A*]" (*prima participatio*), or "primordial cause" (*primordialis causa*);
C "not through themselves" (*non per se ipsa*), or "participating in [*A*] through [*B*]" (*per . . . participantia*), or "whatever are *x*" (*quaecunque . . .*).[9]

Hinführung zu Periphyseon (Műnster: Aschendorff, 1982), pp. 256–295; for the relation between that doctrine and Dionysius' teaching regarding divine names, see Stephen Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena: An Investigation of the Prehistory and Evolution of the Pseudo-Dionysian Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 1978), pp. 125–192 (revised Italian edition: *Da Giamblico a Eriugena. Origini e sviluppi della tradizione pseudo-dionisiana*, a cura di Marialucrezia Leone e Christoph Helmig, Bari: Edizioni di pagina, pp. 157–236).

6 *Periph.* III. 622B (133–134).

7 Dionysius: *De Divinis Nominibus*, chapters. 4. 1–13. 4, 693B-984A (143. 9–231.8). However, Eriugena's handling of terms 4–6 perhaps also reflects Augustine's teaching – see note 87 – and his handling of term 8 perhaps also Boethius' – see note 21.

8 Dionysius: *DDN*, chapters 11. 6–12. 4, 953B-972B (221. 13–226. 5).

9 Eriugena: *Periph.* III. 622B-623C (135–195). Eriugena describes only the first ten of the fifteen terms in detail – attaching to them the ordinals "third, fourth" (*tertia, quarta*), etc. – , noting the last five of that enumeration only briefly. However, his reference at *Periph.* III. 624D (246) to Perfection as "in fifteenth place, as it were" (*veluti quinto decimo loco*) shows that he envisions a formal enumeration of all fifteen terms.

For example, the teacher states that "Power through itself occupies the seventh seat among the primordial causes and is the first participation in supreme and true Power, the other kinds of powers after it being participations in it."[10]

This discussion should be read in conjunction with two others in the same context. In the first discussion, the teacher provides an enumeration of five terms:

1 Goodness
2 Being
3 Life
4 Wisdom
5 Power

that intersect with *two* terms drawn from two sets of alternative terms again derived from Dionysius' treatise: **[86]**

A "unitary *x*" (*unum*), or "supreme *x*" (*summum*), or "truly *x*" (*vere* . . .), or "*x* through itself by itself in itself" (*per se ipsam ex se ipsa in se ipsa*);
B "*x* by participation in [*A*]" (*quod participatione* . . . *est*).[11]

In the second discussion, the student provides an enumeration of five terms:

1 Goodness
2 Being
3 Life
4 Reason
5 Wisdom

that again intersect with two terms drawn from two sets of alternative terms derived from Dionysius:

B "*x* through itself" (*per se ipsam*), or "primordial cause" (*primordialis causa*);
C "participating in [*B*]" (*participare* . . .), or "effects [of primordial causes]" (*effectus earum*).[12]

10 *Periph.* III. 623A-B (176–179) *per se ipsam virtus inter primordiales septimam sedem occupat. Et est prima participatio summae ac verae virtutis, caeterae vero post eam virtutum species participationes ipsius sunt*. Eriugena's Latin suffix *per se ipsam* translates the Greek prefix au)to- in Dionysius' text. This can be seen by comparing Dionysius, *DDN* 2. 1, 636C (122. 1–5) with Eriugena, *Versio Dionysii* 1119B-C and Dionysius, *DDN* 5. 5, 820A-B (183. 12–184. 1) with Eriugena, *Versio Dionysii* 1148B-C.

11 *Periph.* III. 621A-B (83–86). The two intersecting terms correspond to the first and second terms in the main enumeration of *Periph.* III. 622B ff. (133 ff.).

12 *Periph.* III. 629B-D (448–465). The two intersecting terms correspond to the second and third terms in the main enumeration of *Periph.* III. 622B ff. (133 ff.).

If we compare the main discussion of the fifteen terms with Dionysius' treatment of the names of God in *De Divinis Nominibus*, we find that Eriugena is indeed drawing primarily upon his acknowledged authority.[13] In fact, the Latin writer is extracting his terminology from chapters 4 to 13 of the Dionysian treatise following the latter's order of presentation **[87]** if not its thematic emphases almost exactly.[14] Thus, Eriugena's *bonitas, essentia*, and *vita* correspond to the "Goodness" (*agathotēs*), "Being" (*on*), and "Life" (*zōē*) that are the main topics of Dionysius' chapters 4, 5, and 6. His *ratio* and *intelligentia* do not correspond to the main topics of any Dionysian chapters, although the notions of "reason/word" (*logos*) and "intelligence" (*nous*) both occur within the discussion of chapter 7.[15] Moreover, Eriugena's *sapientia* corresponds to the "wisdom" (*sophia*) that is the main topic of Dionysius' chapter 7. His *virtus* corresponds to the "power" (*dunamis*) that is the main topic of Dionysius' chapter 8. Eriugena's *beatitudo* does not correspond to the main topic of any Dionysian chapter, although the notion of "salvation" (*sōtēria*) – a spiritual state presupposed by blessedness – occurs within the discussion of chapter 8.[16] Similarly his *veritas* does not correspond to the main topic of any chapter in Dionysius, although such notions as "same – different" (*tauton – heteron*) – logical categories presupposed by truth – occur within the discussion of chapter 9.[17] Eriugena's *aeternitas* does not correspond to the main topic of any Dionysian chapter, although the notion occurs in connection with the "ancient of days" (*hēmerōn palaios*) that is discussed in chapter 10.[18] Similarly, his *magnitudo* does not correspond to the main topic of any chapter in Dionysius, although the notion occurs in connection with the "all-powerful" (*pantokratōr*) also discussed in chapter 10.[19] Eriugena's *amor* does not correspond to the main topic of any Dionysian chapter, although the notion of "friendship" (*philia*) occurs within the discussion of chapter 11.[20] Moreover, his *pax* corresponds to the

13 It has been noted that the term *primordialis causa* itself is Augustinian and that certain aspects of Eriugena's doctrine of primordial causes are derived from Augustine both directly and indirectly (via Bede). See Goulven Madec, *Jean Scot et ses auteurs. Annotations érigéniennes* (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1988), p. 100; Schrimpf, *op. cit*. [note 4], pp. 260–264; and Robert D. Crouse, "*Primordiales causae* in Eriugena's Interpretation of Genesis: Sources and Significance," in *Iohannes Scottus Eriugena: The Bible and Hermeneutics. Proceedings of the Ninth International Colloquium of the Society for the Promotion of Eriugenian Studies held at Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve, June 7–10, 1995*, eds. Gerd van Riel, Carlos Steel, and James McEvoy (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1996), pp. 209–220. However, Eriugena's discussion of the *order* of the primordial causes seems to be primarily indebted to Dionysius.

14 In this paragraph, we will argue that not all of Eriugena's fifteen divine names correspond to the principal divine names in Dionysius. However, all the Eriugenian names correspond to names that occur at least somewhere in Dionysius' text albeit not receiving special emphasis. For further details of these correlations, see the excursus at the end of the present essay.

15 See Dionysius, *DDN* 7. 4, 872C (198. 21–199. 7) and 7. 2, 868B-C (195. 3–20), respectively.

16 See *DDN* 8. 9, 896D-897C (205. 16–207. 5).

17 See *DDN* 9. 4–5, 912B-913B (209. 9–211.12).

18 See *DDN* 10. 2–3, 937B-940A (215. 8–217. 4).

19 See *DDN* 10. 1 (936D-937A (214. 9–215. 7).

20 See *DDN* 11. 2 (952A (219. 14–24).

"peace" (*eirēnē*) that is the main topic of Dionysius' chapter 11. Finally, his *unitas* and *perfectio* correspond to the "unity" (*hen*) and "perfection" (*teleion*) that are the main topics of Dionysius' chapter 13.[21]

[88] The relation between Eriugena's notion of primordial causes and Dionysius' notion of divine names can be seen as straightforward in the light of the summary above. There are certain ambivalences in this relation that have been discussed in the earlier literature. For example, the fact that the Latin writer makes the fifteen terms intersect sometimes with three terms drawn from the sets *A*, *B*, *C*; sometimes with two terms drawn from the sets *A*, *B*; and sometimes with two terms drawn from the sets *B*, *C* results from the nature of the original division on which *Periphyseōn* is based. The first intersection is in accordance with the cognitive distinction between Creating and Not Created, Created and Creating, and Created and Not Creating Nature,[22] the second with the cognitive identification of Created and Creating with Created and Not Creating[23] Nature, and the third with the cognitive identification of Creating and Not Created with Created and Creating Nature[24] Moreover, the facts that Eriugena attributes to the term "participation" in the set of terms *B* an active sense and includes the term "through itself" (*per se ipsam*) in both the sets of terms *A* and *B* similarly result from the nature of *Periphyseōn*'s original division. The attribution of an active sense to the term "participation" (*participatio*) in the set of terms *B* is in line with the cognitive distinction between Creating and Not Created and Created and Creating Nature,[25] and **[89]** the inclusion of the term "through itself" (*per se ipsam*) in both the sets of terms *A* and *B* in line with the cognitive identification of Creating and Not Created

21 In working out his enumeration of the fifteen primordial causes, it seems possible that Eriugena was also recalling certain ideas from his reading of Boethius' *De Consolatione Philosophiae.* The insertion of the eighth name – "blessedness" (*beatitudo*), which is not prominent in Dionysius' but very prominent in Boethius' account of the divine names – is perhaps the best indication of this. In the third book of *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, its author employs the *persona* of Philosophia to develop an intricate argument in which ends of human conduct are explained in terms of the interrelations of blessedness, goodness, divinity, and unity, all of these being viewed as transcendent. At the conclusion of the argument, "Boethius" asks whether Philosophia is mocking him. He notes that she began her discussion by stating that Blessedness was the "supreme Good" (*summum bonum*), briefly summarizes her ensuing argument to the effect that Goodness is identical with Divinity, Divinity identical with Unity, and Unity identical with Goodness, and finally asks why she goes in where she intends to come out "unfolding a certain wonderful circle of the divine simplicity" (*mirabilem quendam divinae simplicitatis orbem complicare*). Philosophia replies that there was no intention of mocking Boethius. She had proceeded in this way because the form of the divine substance is the well-rounded sphere described by Parmenides in his poem, and Plato teaches that discourses should be similar to the things they describe (Boethius, *De Consolatione Philosophiae* III, pr. 12, 77–106 Moreschini).

22 Thus, *A / B / C*.

23 Thus *A / B = C*.

24 Thus *A = B / C*. For these possibilities of cognitive distinction and identification see Eriugena, *Periph*. II. 527A-528B (84–116).

25 Thus, *A / B*.

with Created and Creating Nature.[26] Nevertheless, despite the presence of such ambivalences, the relation between the primordial causes and the divine names is clear. In short, the divine names are the fifteen terms simply as enumerated above and the primordial causes the fifteen terms when further defined by set *B* of the intersecting terms.

Now the student had initiated this stage of the discussion by asking about the order of the primordial causes that had been discussed hitherto "in a confused and indistinct manner."[27] Does the teacher think that the question has been answered by appealing to the authority of Dionysius and citing his list? This is apparently not the case, since the teacher goes on to elaborate a discussion in which an order or orders of the primordial causes is established according to purely rational criteria. This discussion may for convenience of exposition perhaps be divided into two main stages. The first deals with the general principles of ordering the primordial causes, being further divisible into two stages separated by a geometrical analogy, whereas the second deals with a specific example of such ordering.

General principles of ordering the primordial causes

The geometrical analogy mentioned above is formulated in the following exchange between teacher and student:[28]

26 Thus, $A = B$.

27 With respect to the aims of the present essay, the question whether the student is justified in characterizing the earlier treatment of the question of the primordial causes' order as confused and indistinct is a subordinate one. However, it will be addressed briefly in the *Excursus* below.

28 *Periph.* III. 624D-626A (253–306) [N] *Et ut hoc exemplo rerum sensibilium clarius lucescat, centrum et circumscriptum ei circulum diligenter intuere rectasque lineas a centro inchoatas et ad circulum porrectas ibique terminatas.* [A] *Saepe hoc aspexi, seu in animo per phantasiam interius, seu in figura visibili corporeaque exterius sensibus subiecta.* [N] *Non intuitus es quomodo omnes lineae in centro adunantur, ut nulla illarum ab aliis discerni possit? Nimirum, quia omnes in eo unum sunt et nullo modo a se ipsis discrepant, ita ut rationabiliter non iunctura linearum in unum, sed fons atque principium simplex et individuum, ex quo sive naturaliter sive arte multiplex linearum numerus procedit, centrum diffiniatur. Est enim centrum universale linearum initium, in quo omnes unum sunt.* [A] *Hoc quoque in geometricis rationibus mihi apertissime suasum. Sed haec omnia plus animo quam sensu percipiuntur, sive interius sive exterius de talibus velit quis disputare.* [N] *Recte dicis. Haec enim et huiusmodi pura mentis acie diiudicantur. Vides, ni fallor, in prima linearum progressione ab ipsa unitate, quae in centro est, quantum sibi invicem lineae coniunguntur, ut vix discerni a se invicem possint. Dum vero longius a centro protenduntur, latius paululum spatia quibus a se invicem segregantur crescere incipiunt, donec ad extremum circulum quo finiuntur perveniant, ubi latissima sua diastemata mensurantur (hoc est spatia inter lineas constituta) quae sibi invicem aequalia sunt, ut nulla eorum latiora aut angustiora aliis reperiantur, quemadmodum et in ipsis lineis una eademque longitudo est, in tantum ut earum nullae longiores aliis aut breviores sint, naturali rationabilique aequalitate in utrisque servata, in latitudine spatiorum dico et in longitudine linearum.* [A] *Ita est, et plane intelligo.* [N] *Quid, si velis spatiorum et linearum numerum dinoscere et in ordinem quendam redigere? Num potes speciale spatium lineamque specialiter invenire, ex quo vel ex qua naturaliter ac proprie incipias?* [A] *Mihi quarenti non occurrit. Tanta siquidem aequalitas in his praevalet, ut nullum spatium ab alio, nulla linea ab*

[T/1] And in order that this might become clearer through an example from among sensible things, consider carefully a centre and a circle drawn around it and the straight lines begun from the centre and extended to the circumference where they terminate.

[S/1] I have often seen this either internally in my mind through imagination or externally in a visible and corporeal figure subject to the senses.

[T/2] Have you not seen how all the lines are united in the centre so that none of them can be distinguished from the others? This is undoubtedly because they are all one in it and in no way differ from one another, so that **[90]** the centre is defined rationally not as the joining of the lines in one but as the source and the simple and indivisible principle from which the manifold plurality of the lines proceeds either by nature or by art. Indeed, the centre is the universal beginning of the lines in which all are one.

[S/2] I I am also persuaded by geometrical reasoning that this is clearly the case. These things are perceived more by the mind than by sense, whether one wishes to argue about such things internally or externally.

[T/3] You are right. For these and similar things are judged by the pure gaze of the mind. If I am not mistaken, you see in the first progression of the lines from the unity itself that is in the centre how the lines are joined among themselves to such an extent that they can hardly be distinguished from one another. But as they extend further from the centre, the spaces by which they are separated among themselves begin gradually to widen until they reach the circumference which terminates them. Here, their widest "intervals" – that is, the spaces established between the lines – are measured. These are equal to one another so that none of them is found to be wider or narrower than another, just as among the lines themselves there is one and the same length so that none of them is longer or shorter than another. A natural and rational equality is preserved in both, that is to say in the width of the intervals and the length of the lines.

[S/3] It is so, and I fully understand.

[T/4] But what happens if you wish to discern the number of the spaces and lines and reduce them to a certain order? Is there any specific way in which you can discover the specific space or line from which, in either of these cases, you can begin in a natural and proper manner?

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alia per differentiam quandam seu proprietatem possit discerni. Nam et ille circulus, intra cuius ambitum omnia colliguntur, ita sibimet in se ipso similis est, ut nulla pars eius ab alia discernatur seu natura seu arte. Continua namque quantitate pollet. Ac per hoc nullo certo principio inchoat, nullo constituto fine concluditur, sed totus suimet in toto et principium est, et finis subsistit. Hinc est quod circularis motus ANARCHOS *a graecis (hoc est principio carens) recte nominatur aliorumque motuum (id est recti et obliqui) obtinet principatum.* [N] *In his omnibus non falleris, ut opinor. Non enim aliter vera edocet ratio. Num itaque cernis quod nulla lex figurarum tibi obstat vel te cohibet ne ab omni spatio seu linea incipias totam figuram et ordinare et numerare? Sic enim imperat ratio, ac per hoc quot spatia lineaeque sunt, tot principia finesque numerandi et ordinandi fieri possunt.* [A] *Huic etiam conclusioni non resisto. Sed quorsum tendat, expecto nosse*.

[S/4] When I seek this, nothing presents itself. For such equality prevails among these things that no space can be distinguished from another and no line from another through any differentia or property. Even that circle within whose circumference all are collected is so similar to itself and in itself that none of its parts is distinguished from another either by nature or by art. It enjoys continuity of quantity and therefore begins from no definite beginning and ends at no determinate end, the whole of it being wholly beginning and end. This is why circular motion is rightly called *anarchos* by the Greeks – that is, "lacking beginning" – and holds priority over the other motions – the rectilinear and the oblique.

[T/5] I think that you are not mistaken on all those points, for true reason does not teach otherwise. Do you not then see that no law of figures prevents or inhibits you from ordering and numbering the whole figure beginning from any of its spaces or lines? Reason demands this. Therefore as many beginnings and ends of numbering and ordering can be made as there are spaces and lines. **[91]**

[S/5] I do not resist this conclusion also. But I am waiting to know where this argument is leading.

That Eriugena should introduce the notion of circularity into his discussion of the primordial causes should come as no surprise.[29] Such a careful reader of Dionysius' *On Divine Names* was obviously aware that a circular motion of "procession" (*proodos*) and "reversion" (*epistrophē*) governs the relation between the participated and participating aspects of **[92]** each divine name. This circularity emerges perhaps most clearly in chapter 4 of Dionysius' treatise where an interpretation of "Love" (*amor*) as the unifying and connective power that moves the higher to provide for the lower and the lower to revert to the higher is attributed to Dionysius' own teacher Hierotheos.[30] Attentive study of the Dionysian treatise would probably have been sufficient to convince Eriugena that a circular motion of procession and reversion also governs the relation between the divine names themselves. For example, there is clearly a development from the initial "Goodness" (*agathotēs*) of chapter 4 to the final "Unity" (*hen*) of chapter 14 of *On Divine Names* through a series of increasingly multiple intermediate names that various later readers have noticed.[31] Of course, Eriugena would not have understood the precise structure of overlapping circles that underlies the sequence of divine names, having no access to the writings of the pagan Greek philosopher Proclus who provided Dionysius with the model of thinking in this manner.[32]

29 The image was introduced by Dionysius himself at *DDN* 5. 6, 821A (185. 4–11), although he does not elaborate its philosophical implications to the same extent.

30 Dionysius, *DDN* 4. 11–17, 708B-713D (156. 1–162. 5).

31 These readers include Thomas Aquinas in the Middle Ages and Hans Urs von Balthasar in modern times.

32 For details of this overlapping structure see Stephen Gersh: "Dionysius' *On Divine Names* Revisited. A Structural Analysis," in *Dionysius* 28 (2010), pp. 7–26.

However, Eriugena introduces his geometrical analogy primarily to illustrate another aspect of circularity. Within the first phase of his explanation of the general principles governing the primordial causes' ordering – before the analogy – , the teacher argues that the philosopher who reasons piously and purely can "begin from any one of them at will" (*ab unaquaque earum prout vult inchoare*), with his mind's eye or true reason "interweave in a certain order of contemplation" (*ordine quodam contemplationis convolvere*) all the others that he can, and "set an end to his contemplation in absolutely any one of them" (*in qualicunque earum terminum suae theoriae constituere*).[33] He adds that his own humble capacity of contemplation has illustrated this by beginning from Goodness, continuing with the enumeration of the primordial causes "as though established in a certain order" (*veluti quodam ordine constitutae*), and ending with Perfection.[34] Within the second phase of his explanation of the general principles governing the primordial causes' ordering – after the analogy – the teacher explains how the greatest theologians and their successors both begin their contemplation and end that contemplation with any one that they wish, so **[93]** that there are as many orders of the primordial causes as there are primordial causes themselves "in accordance with the capacity for contemplation and the inclination of each investigator" (*iuxta capacitatem singulorum theoriae, prout quisque voluerit*).[35]

Now it is clear that Eriugena is not simply describing a situation in which one might illustrate the principles of definition by initially positing the structure known in logic as the *Arbor Porphyriana* and then naming the genera, species, and differentiae in some sequence. For example, one investigator might begin from the *summum genus*, descend through subaltern genera, and then ascend again to the highest genus whereas another might proceed in the reverse order. Although there are Carolingian pedagogical handbooks that deal with the most elementary topics, such an argument would be irrelevant to the present context in which it is not the classification of natural species but the ordering of primordial causes that is at issue. But what kind of dialectical process precisely does Eriugena have in mind when he advocates the methodology of beginning, continuing and ending *ad libitum* among the primordial causes? Fortunately, there is sufficient evidence to provide a clear answer to this question both in the details of the geometrical illustration supplied by the author and in the first and second phases of his rational explanation of the primordial causes' order. This evidence might be summarized under the headings of references to the idealistic, non-discursive, and theophanic aspects respectively of the dialectical process.[36]

33 Eriugena, *Periph*. III. 624C (239–243).

34 *Periph.* III. 624C-D (243–249).

35 *Periph.* III. 626A-B (307–322). The same point had already been stated more briefly and without discussion immediately after the initial enumeration of the fifteen causes at *Periph.* III. 624A (211–216).

36 At *Periph*. III. 623D (206–207) the teacher also notes that the primordial causes "extend to infinity" (*in infinitum protendere*). This aspect of the primordial causes' nature is not developed in the

i Eriugena's doctrine of primordial causes is *idealistic* in the sense of implying that reality is to some degree mind-dependent.[37] That this aspect of his doctrine is especially relevant to the present question is indicated by the teacher's observation introducing the explanation of the causes' order **[94]** according to purely rational criteria[38] that the order of the primordial causes is "not established in themselves but in a contemplation: that is, from the viewpoint of the mind investigating them" (*non in ipsis sed in theoria* (*hoc est in animi contuitu quaerentis eas*)), and by his explanation a few lines later that the primordial causes form a unity and "are delimited or separated from one another in an order known to nobody" (*nullique cognito ordine diffinitae aut a se invicem segregatae*).[39] Given that the first statement suggests that there is an order among the causes and that this order is known to the human mind – being constituted through the latter – whereas the second statement suggests that there is an order among the causes and that this order is *not* known to the human mind, an idealism of the subjective kind is obviously to be excluded.[40]

ii The fundamentally *non-discursive* character of the contemplation that arranges the primordial causes in a certain order and indeed establishes the primordial causes as such – as opposed to the necessarily discursive character of the verbal expression of that contemplation – is assumed as a consequence of a mode of philosophical thinking that Eriugena derives directly from Dionysius and indirectly from Dionysius' pagan and Christian Platonic antecedents. A contrast between non-discursive and discursive thinking is probably for him the essential feature of the distinction between two kinds of "reason" (*ratio*) that the student makes towards the end of the present discussion with his teacher's seeming approval.[41] One kind of reason is "wisdom" (*sapientia*) which is defined as the power whereby the "contemplative mind" (*contemplativus animus*) of man or angel considers such divine and eternal things as the First

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ensuing discussion, although the philosophical ramifications of their infinity are probably similar to those of their circularity.

37 It is a further token of this idealism that, whenever the primordial causes are mentioned, each individual cause and their totality is described as a "contemplation" (*theoria, contemplatio, intentio, etc.*). See pp. 97–98.

38 It is preceded by an observation regarding the "theophanic" nature of the causes. See pp. 98–99.

39 *Periph*. III. 624A (211–219).

40 The "objective" (= trans-subjective) character of Eriugena's idealism is further underlined by two further aspects of the relation between the primordial causes and cognition mentioned in the present discussion: *1*. The primordial causes are thoughts in the mind of God. At *Periph.* III. 626C (330–333) "the gnostic power of the Creator" (*gnostica conditoris virtus*) is said to number them; *2*. The primordial causes are themselves minds that think. At *Periph.* III. 623D-624A (207–210) the causes are said to "not know any end that limits them except their Creator's will" (*finem nesciunt quo claudantur, praeter creatoris sui voluntatem*).

41 However, the terminological distinction–if not its philosophically charged sense–is probably Augustinian. See note 87.

> Cause itself and the primordial causes that the Father has created at once and all **[95]** together in his Word, and is also described as "theology" (*theologia*). Another kind of reason is "knowledge" (*scientia*) which is defined as the power whereby the angelic or human contemplative mind discourses on the nature of things which proceed from the primordial causes through genera, species, and differentiae, and is also described as "physics" (*physica*).[42]

The precise nature of this contrast between non-discursive and discursive thinking emerges from two types of argument in which the question of the primordial causes' order is elaborated in relation to the structural intersection between the fifteen divine names and various dichotomies expressing the contrast of Creating with Created Nature. The first type of argument is based on the negation or affirmation of the oppositions of whole and parts and of genus and species. At one point, the teacher argues that the Creator is himself the division and collection of the creature "being both genus and species and whole and part, yet neither genus nor species nor whole nor part" (*et genus et species et totum et pars, dum nullius sit vel genus vel species seu totum seu pars*) in that these things proceed from and return to him.[43] Here, affirmation and negation of genus/species and whole/part represent the relations of identity and distinction respectively between Creating and Not Created Nature (= God) and Created and Not Creating Nature (= effects of primordial causes). Later on, the student notes that science can hold that the things proceeding from the primordial causes are "divided into genera and species" (*inque genera ac species divisae*), although among the primordial causes themselves "there are not certain more general and certain more specific causes" (*non . . . quaedam quidem generaliora sint, quaedam vero specialiora*).[44] Here, affirmation and negation of genus/species represent the status of Created and Not Creating Nature (= effects of primordial causes) and Created and Creating Nature (= primordial causes), respectively. The second type of argument is based on the negation or affirmation of order itself. This is illustrated when the teacher argues *a*. that the order of the primordial causes is something that "accrues to them in their effects" (*in effectibus suis patiuntur*); *b*. that one should nevertheless not conclude that **[96]** the First Cause "is not order or ordering or that ordering in itself is not enumerated among the principles of things" (*ordo non sit vel ordinatio, vel . . . per se ipsam ordinatio in principiis rerum non numeretur*)[45] – it being simply the case that in the First Cause and in its first participation, all order is unified and un-differentiated, and no order clashes with any other order – ; and *c*. the order of the primordial causes is constituted "according to the judgment of the

42 *Periph.* III. 629A-B (431–447). Allowing for a slight alteration in terminology, the student's statement casts light not only on the order of the primordial causes but also on the nature of the fourth, fifth, and sixth causes (*i.e.* Reason, Intelligence, and Wisdom).

43 *Periph.* III. 621C (97–101).

44 *Periph*. III. 629A-C (438–455).

45 The "principles of things" are clearly equivalent to the primordial causes.

contemplating mind" (*iuxta contemplationis animi arbitrium)*.[46] Here, affirmation and negation of order(ing) represent both the status of Created and Not Creating Nature (= effects of primordial causes) and Created and Creating Nature (= primordial causes) respectively (*a, c*), and the ambivalent status of both Creating and Not Created Nature (= God) and of Created and Creating Nature (= primordial causes) themselves (*b)*.

Although Eriugena does not explicitly raise the question of the contrast between non-discursive and discursive thinking in the present context, his arguments based on the affirmation and negation of whole and parts (or genus and species) and of order introduce an explicit notion of non-discursive thinking and an implicit contrast with its discursive counterpart. The Latin writer had only to read Dionysius' argument that terms indicating perfections when applied to God are both ranked in order of generality and not ranked in any order of generality[47] to discover one of the primary *logical* criteria of non-discursive thinking: suspension of the law of contradiction; or else to recall Augustine's doctrine that each created thing can be understood with respect to angelic cognition through the presence, the beginning of presence, the absence, and the beginning of absence of its form[48] to discern one of the primary *noetic* criteria of non-discursive thinking: timeless dialectic.[49] Within the extracts of **[97]** *Periphyseon* considered immediately above, suspension of the law of contradiction and timeless dialectic are underlying assumptions of all three passages, although suspension of the law of contradiction is most explicit in stage *b* of the third argument – one might note especially the remark that "all order in the highest cause of all things and in its first participation is one and simple and is distinguished by no differences"[50] – and timeless dialectic most explicit in the combination of stages *a* and *c* with stage *b*.

An explicit notion of non-discursive thinking and an implicit contrast with its discursive counterpart is also the most important meaning that Eriugena intends his reader to find in the geometrical analogy that was situated so prominently in the rational discussion concerning the order of the primordial causes. One will perhaps recall the teacher's observation (at T/2) to the effect that the lines extending

46 *Periph.* III. 624A-C (211–238).

47 Cf. Dionysius: *DDN* 5. 5, 820 A-B (183. 12–184. 1) and *DDN* 2. 1, 636C-637A (122. 6–13). Eriugena was clearly influenced by these passages when formulating the first type of argument mentioned in our previous paragraph.

48 Augustine: *De Genesi ad Litteram* IV. 21, 120. 8-IV. 28, 127. 21 Zycha. Eriugena shows his knowledge of this theory and develops an independent variant at *Periph.* III, 690C-693B (2965–3082).

49 For a more detailed discussion of these questions see Stephen Gersh, "Through the Rational to the Supra-Rational: Four Criteria of Non-Discursive Thinking in Medieval Platonism," in *Universalità della ragione. Pluralità delle filosofie nel Medioevo = XII Congresso Internazionale di Filosofia Medievale, Palermo, 17–22 settembre 2007*, ed. Alessandro Musco, et al. (Palermo: Istituto di Studi Medievali, 2012), vol. 1, pp. 125–147.

50 *Periph.* III. 624B (232–233) *omnis ordo in summa omnium causa et in ipsius prima participatione unus ac simplex est nullisque differentiis discernitur*.

from the centre to the circumference of the circle are united in the centre, so that it is impossible to distinguish any line from the others *in the centre*. Given that the lines represent the procession of the primordial causes into their effects, Eriugena is here attempting to show that there is complete equality between the causes at the *beginning* of the procession. The student's later statement that "science can hold that the things proceeding from the primordial causes are divided into genera and species, although among the primordial causes themselves there are not certain more general and certain more specific causes"[51] can therefore be understood as an interpretation of this part of the geometrical analogy. The arithmetical analogy that precedes the geometrical one in both the citations of the latter – according to which "no number is distinguished from any other" (*nullus tamen numerus ab alio numero discernitur*) in the monad, although from the monad "every multiplication of numbers proceeds to infinity" (*omnis numerorum multiplicatio progreditur in infinitum*)[52] – further illustrates this unity of the primordial causes at the beginning of the procession.[53] However, it is the continuation of the geometrical analogy that is most crucial.[54] One will perhaps further recall the teacher's and the student's agreement (at T/3 and S/4) to the effect that the lines extending from the centre to the **[98]** circumference of the circle and the spaces between them are equal, so that it is impossible to rank lines or spaces in any definitive order *at the circumference*. Given that both lines and spaces represent the procession of the primordial causes into their effects, Eriugena is now attempting to show that there is complete equality between the causes also at the *end* of their procession.[55] The teacher's earlier statements that the order of the primordial causes "accrues to them in their effects" and "is constituted according to the judgment of the contemplating mind"[56] can therefore be understood as relevant to this part of the geometrical analogy. Now the notion that the primordial causes are equal at the end of their procession is inherently more paradoxical than the notion that they are equal at the beginning and must indicate that the effects of primordial causes *when those effects are considered as primordial causes* are not ordered. It further implies that non-discursiveness is symbolized by the circumference of the geometrical figure.

iii. Eriugena's doctrine of primordial causes is *theophanic* in the sense of implying that reality is divinely revealed to different degrees, the relevance of this aspect of his doctrine to the present inquiry being indicated by two of the teacher's observations. After the enumeration of the fifteen causes according to the inspired authority of Dionysius[57] but before the explanation of the causes'

51 See above p. 95 (re: *Periph.* III. 629A-C (438–455)).

52 *Periph.* III. 624A-B (219–225). Cf. the briefer statement at *Periph.* III. 621C (101–107).

53 Dionysius had interpreted the geometrical image as signifying the unity of the primordial causes at the beginning of the procession. See note 28.

54 Here, there is no parallel with the arithmetical analogy.

55 Eriugena here goes beyond Dionysius in interpreting the geometrical image. See p. 97.

56 See above pp. 95–96 (re: *Periph.* III. 624A-C (211–238)).

57 It will be followed by the observation regarding the "idealistic" nature of the causes. See p. 93.

order according to purely rational criteria,[58] the teacher notes that the "uniformity of contemplation" (*theoria uniformiter*) in all the primordial causes shines everywhere upon perceiving minds "in godlike form" (*deiformiter*) either in things that can be understood and named, or in those that can be understood but not named or in those that can be neither understood nor named.[59] The emphasis on the unity of the contemplation of the primordial causes and on God as the sender of the illumination implied is, however, complemented by an emphasis on the multiplicity of the aforesaid contemplation and on man as the receiver of the associated illumination. In response to his student's final **[99]** question regarding the primordial causes' order, the teacher notes that only those guided by a purer mind can reach "the highest ascents of contemplation" (*altissimi theoriae ascensus*), that one can rise "to the extent that inner light will have bestowed itself on the capacity of the seeker" (*quantum intima lux capacitati quaerentium se donaverit*), and that the perfect and illuminated alone can scale "the highest steps of divine contemplation" (*altissima divinae theoriae* BĒMATA).[60] It is only after establishing these methodological criteria governing his relation in one direction to Dionysius and in the other to the student that the teacher will embark on the final phase of his exposition.[61]

Given that Eriugena has introduced the notion of circularity into his discussion of the primordial causes explicitly in order to illustrate first, their procession and reversion into their spatio-temporal effects and secondly, the movement of non-discursive thinking that objectifies them,[62] it only remains to note one aspect of the geometrical analogy that is only implicit but potentially significant. This is closely associated with Eriugena's treatment of "contemplation" (*theōria, contemplatio*) on the one hand, as the collective comprehension of the fifteen primordial causes[63] – in a specific sequence or combination chosen by the investigator – and on the other, as the individual comprehension of each separate primordial cause.[64] It is presumably in terms of this double meaning of contemplation that it is possible for him to argue that each primordial cause is "the supreme *x*" (*summa . . .*) while there is a primordial cause of "Greatness" (*magnitudo*) as such,[65] or that each primordial cause is "the true *x*" (*vera . . .*) while there is a primordial cause of "Truth" (*veritas*) itself.[66] The same duplicity of meaning allows him to argue that

58 This explanation begins with the observation regarding the "idealistic" nature of the causes. See p. 93.

59 *Periph.* III. 623C-D (196–204).

60 *Periph.* III. 627A-C (346–369).

61 See the next section.

62 *i.e.* in an idealistic and theophanic manner.

63 See *Periph* III. 623C-D (196–204) and 627A-C (346–369) noted above.

64 The primordial causes are described in this way within the original enumeration of fifteen terms at *Periph.* III. 622B-623C (133–195). Thus, Goodness is "the first consideration" (*prima consideratio*), Life "the third intention" (*tertia intentio*), Reason "the fourth contemplation" (*quarta theoria*), Wisdom "the sixth consideration" (*sexta contemplatio*), Blessedness "the eighth level of contemplation" (*octavus theoriae gradus*), Truth "the ninth contemplation in the order" (*nona in ordine theoria*), etc.

65 *Periph.* III. 622B ff. (133 ff.) + 623C (192).

66 *Periph*. III. 622B ff. (133 ff.) + 623B (185–188).

each primordial cause is a unity in relation to the multiplicity of its effects while **[100]** there is a primordial cause of "Unity" (*unitas*) as such[67] and that the fifteen primordial causes together constitute an order while there is a sixteenth primordial cause of "Order" (*ordo*) itself.[68] This self-reflexivity of the process in which any individual primordial cause must be conceived with reference to other such causes is clearly a further aspect of the causes' circularity.

A specific example of ordering the primordial causes

Having heard and accepted the teacher's explanation of the general principles governing the ordering of the primordial causes, the student nonetheless asks his mentor to remove a doubt that continues to trouble him regarding the ordering of those causes:

> But although matters stand in this way, I would not believe that you began your enumeration of the principal causes from that very Goodness through itself without some specific reason. For those who argue with formal correctness are not accustomed to state things casually and without some reason.[69]

This question introduces the final phase of the discussion concerning the ordering of the primordial causes in which a specific example of such ordering is discussed first by the teacher and then by the student.

The teacher initially expresses both hesitancy and eagerness in responding to the question, the former because of his sense of humility regarding his own position within the hierarchy of purified, illuminated, and perfected minds that seek to understand and the latter because of his sense of duty with respect to the biblical injunction to make the Lord's talent buried within the earth yield a profit.[70] He then attempts to justify the previous enumeration of the primordial causes where Goodness was taken **[101]** as the starting point by arguing that his earlier statement was "according to this reason" (*hac igitur ratione*) yet "not without the authority of the Holy Fathers and primarily that of Dionysius the Areopagite" (*nec absque sanctorum patrum auctoritate et maxime Ariopagitae Dionysii*).[71]

The reasoning that Eriugena derives from sacred authority, in practice by combining ideas drawn mainly from various passages in *On Divine Names*, consists of

67 *Periph*. III. 621C (97–107) + III. 623C (192).

68 *Periph.* III. 624A-C (211–236). Cf. *Periph.* III, 626B-627A (323–345). The suggestion of the additional primordial cause of Order, together with its association with the divine providence that guides our contemplation of the causes, introduces another somewhat Augustinian element into a predominantly Dionysian argument. See Augustine, *De Ordine* I. 1, 1–5 Green *et passim*.

69 *Periph.* III. 626D-627A (342–345) *Sed cum haec ita se habeant, non te crediderim sine aliqua speciali ratione principalium causarum connumerationem ab ipsa per se ipsam bonitate inchoasse. Non enim est rite disputantium otiosum quid causa carens dicere*.

70 *Periph.* III. 627B (346–369). Cf. *Matthew* 25. 25–30.

71 *Periph.* III. 627C (370–374).

an initial argument followed by a more powerful one. In the initial argument, the teacher makes a statement to the effect that, since the "Creating Goodness" (*creatrix bonitas*) created that cause that is called "Goodness through itself" (*per se ipsam bonitas*) and is "the most general of the divine gifts" (*generalissima divinarum donationum*) in order that "all things that are" (*omnia quae sunt*) could be led through it "from non-existence to being" (*in essentias ex non existentibus*)[72] – for the same reason, the Creating Goodness is also said to "call things that were not into being" (*quae non erant in essentiam vocare*), or to have brought "all things from nothing into being" (*omnia de nihilo ut essent*) – , it was accordingly necessary that "the understanding of Goodness through itself should precede the understanding of Being through itself" (*intellectus per se ipsam bonitatis intellectum per se ipsam essentiae praecedere*).[73] This order of priority with respect to Goodness and the passage from non-being to being is then justified through an explanation of the statement in *Genesis*: "And God saw all things and behold, they were indeed good,"[74] according to which it was because being arises from goodness rather than goodness from being that the bible did not say "And God saw all things and behold, they were indeed beings."[75] The same order of priority with respect to Goodness is further justified with an elliptical reference to Maximus the Confessor's teaching regarding the *logoi* of "being" (*einai/esse*), "well-being" (*eu einai/bene esse*), and "eternal being" (*aei einai/aeternaliter esse*),[76] according to which both the initial creation of man **[102]** and his final rest are "meaningless" (*abusive dicitur*) without the moral choice of turning towards God embodied in the middle term.

This initial argument elaborated by Eriugena on the basis of Dionysian ideas is perhaps characterized primarily by two features – in addition to the assumption that Goodness is a kind of genus which will only be fully elaborated in the student's later summary of his master's argument.[77] These features are: exploitation of the connotation of *creativity* within the term "Goodness," and treatment of the relation between non-being and being – the two species of the genus – by understanding the relation between the terms as "transition."

The teacher then moves on to a "more powerful argument" (*maioris virtutis argumentum*) to demonstrate that "the goodness of good things is "more general" (*generalior*) than their being" in which the Dionysian provenance becomes even more apparent.[78] He begins by noting that both things that are and things that are

72 The Creating Goodness is here also called "the divine Goodness and more-than-Goodness" (*divina bonitas et plus quam bonitas*). On the three sets of terms intersecting with the divine name of Goodness, see pp. 84–86.

73 *Periph.* III. 627C-D (370–385) Here, the formula: "understanding of *x*" is important because of the idealistic and theophanic character of the *contemplation* involved.

74 *Gen.* 1. 31.

75 *Periph.* III. 627D-628A-B (385–396).

76 For a list of relevant passages in Maximus the Confessor's *Ambigua ad Iohannem*, see Jeauneau's note on *Periph.* III. 628A (392–394).

77 See pp. 103–104.

78 *Periph.* 628A-C (396–416).

not "are called good" (*bona dicuntur*). Next, he explains that things that are not are said to be "better" (*meliora*) than things that are – Things [*a*] that "are not" in the sense of "surpassing being" (*superare essentiam*), and thereby being not accessible to sense or intellect, not subject to differences, properties, and accidents, and not dispersed in space and time are superior to things [*b*] that "are" in the sense of "participating being" (*essentiam participare*) and thereby being accessible to sense or intellect, confined by the definiteness of substance, and dispersed in space and time. This is because [i] the super-essential Good is itself above being, not accessible to sense and intellect, and so forth, and therefore [*ii*] the things [*a*] that "are not" in this sense "approach the Good" (*bono . . . appropinquare*) to a greater degree than do the things [*b*] that "are." Finally, he notes that things that are and things that are not constitute the two "species" (*species*) of goodness.

This more powerful argument drawn by Eriugena from his readings of Dionysius is perhaps characterized primarily by two features – again in addition to the assumption that Goodness is a kind of genus which is only elaborated fully in the student's later summary of his master's argument.[79] These features are exploitation of the connotation of *superiority* within the term "Goodness" and treatment of the relation between non-being and **[103]** being – the two species of the genus – by understanding the first of the related terms both as superiority and as inferiority to being.

Although the exploitation of the connotation of creativity within the term "Goodness" in the initial argument is a patristic commonplace repeated by Dionysius[80] and the understanding of non-being both as superiority and inferiority to being in the more powerful argument a more peculiarly Dionysian teaching,[81] it is notable that the teacher does not at this point refer to another of Dionysius' discussions. This occurs towards the end of *De Divinis Nominibus*, chapter 13 where the Greek theologian concludes that even the term "Goodness" does not apply to the ineffable nature, although in our "desire" (*pothos*) to think and speak about it, and because this name is "most revered" (*septotaton*), we assign the term "Goodness" to it "primarily" (*prōtōs*).[82] If the teacher had inserted a reference to this discussion, he would have been able to remove any doubt that his most recent statements regarding the primacy of Goodness do not compromise the general thesis regarding the circularity of the primordial causes' order established earlier at such great length.[83]

At any rate, the student declares himself satisfied with his mentor's explanation of why the earlier enumeration of the primordial causes began with Goodness through itself:

79 See below pp. 103–104.

80 For example, see Dionysius, *DDN* 4. 4, 697B (146. 13–147. 1).

81 For example, see *DDN* 7. 1, 868A (194, 16–195. 2).

82 *DDN* 13. 3, 981A (229. 15–17). The argument is derived from Proclus' commentary on the first hypothesis of Plato's *Parmenides*.

83 A passing reference to God as "more than Goodness" (*plus quam bonitas*) at *Periph.* III. 627C-D (379–381) suggests that the teacher has perhaps not entirely forgotten this aspect of Dionysius' teaching. However, this point is not elaborated in the present context.

> Now I understand that it was not without good reason that you began your contemplation of the principles as you did. Whoever correctly implements division should begin from the most general, proceed through the more general, and then – to the extent that his power of contemplation allows – arrive at the most specific.[84]

In order to show his grasp of the teacher's argument, he now multiplies examples of division by noting that goodness is "as though a certain genus" (*veluti quoddam genus*) of being and being "a certain species" (*species* **[104]** *quaedam*) of goodness.[85] Similarly, being is a genus of life, since all things that are, are divided into those that are alive and those that are not, and life a genus of reason, since all things that live, are divided into those that are rational and those that are not.[86] The student does not continue the division beyond the point where reason is said to contain "the two species" (*duplex species*) of wisdom and science.[87] Instead, he makes the general observation that the same rule applies "to all or many of the primordial causes" (*aut in omnibus aut in multis primordialibus causes*),[88] not because some of these causes are more general and others more specific – for such "inequality" (*inaequalitas*) would not be possible where "the utmost equality" (*summa aequalitas*) prevails – , but because of what is discernible among the effects of those causes.[89] For example, there are "more multiple participations" (*multipliciores participationes*) of Goodness through itself than there are of Being through itself – the former being participated by things that are and by things that are not, the latter only by things that are – , and similarly more multiple participations of Being through itself than there are of Life through Itself.[90]

Throughout this passage, the student shows that he has to a certain extent fully grasped but also to a certain extent not fully grasped the implications of his teacher's discussion. In noting that there are greater and lesser participations in the primordial causes and that the participations as such arise in the *effects* of the

84 Eriugena: *Periph* III. 628C (417–420) *Iam intelligo non irrationabiliter te inchoasse principiorum considerationem. Quicunque enim recte dividit a generalissimis debet incipere, et per generaliora progredi, ac sic, prout virtus contemplationis succurrit, ad specialissima pervenire*.

85 *Periph.* III. 628D (422–424).

86 *Periph.* III. 628D-629A (424–428).

87 *Periph.* III. 629A (428–432). Jeauneau points out in his note on *Periph.* III. 629A-B (431–444) that the student's distinction between "wisdom" (*sapientia*) and "knowledge" (*scientia*) is based on Augustine's *De Trinitate* rather than on Dionysius. If *scientia* is equivalent to *ratio*, the student's distinction was implied in the original enumeration of the fifteen divine names by the teacher. See note 7.

88 This qualification seems inevitable given that division according to genus, species, and differentiae does not work beyond the sixth cause in the enumeration.

89 *Periph.* III. 629B-C (448–455).

90 *Periph.* III. 629C-630A (455–474).

causes[91] and in further noting that with respect to the effects in which they arise the participations are dependent on the mind of the contemplator yet inherent in the nature of things,[92] the student has clearly understood the *idealistic* and *theophanic* aspects of the teacher's doctrine.[93] But in emphasizing the distinction between the **[105]** primordial causes and their effects and concentrating on the presence of genus and species relations among the latter in his summary,[94] whereas his teacher had emphasized the identity between the primordial causes and their effects and concentrated on the absence of genus and species relations among the latter during his earlier exposition, the student shows that he has not grasped the *non-discursive* element of his mentor's doctrine.[95]

Indeed, there is something of a gap between the teacher's and the student's levels of comprehension. The amplitude of the gap has perhaps already been suggested by their respective comments on the geometrical analogy.[96] One will perhaps recall how teacher and student seemed to agree that the lines extending from the centre to the circumference of the circle and the spaces between them were equal, so that it was impossible to rank lines or spaces in any definitive order at the circumference. One will perhaps recall how the two interlocutors also seemed to agree that, since both lines and spaces represented the procession of the primordial causes into their effects, there was complete equality between the causes both at the *beginning* and at the *end* of their procession (T/3, S/3). However, the student's subsequent comment that the circle enjoyed continuity of motion and was rightly called *anarchos* by the Greeks suggested that he had missed the point (S/4). Apparently, the teacher was interested in the circle's lines and spaces, but the student in its motion.[97]

But perhaps it would be unrealistic to expect the situation to be otherwise, given the relative positions of teacher and student. The relation between Iohannes Scottus Eriugena and his anonymous student is precisely analogous to the relation between Dionysius the Areopagite and Eriugena, just as the relation between Dionysius the Areopagite and Eriugena is precisely analogous to the relation between the mysterious "Hierotheos" and Dionysius. Each thinker's contemplation of the primordial causes represents a theophany according to the level of his own capacity and the degree of his illumination, purification, and perfection. **[106]** Therefore, any explanation of the "natural order" of the primordial causes which to a certain extent also establishes the order of those causes would itself exemplify the unfolding by a posterior member of

91 See especially *Periph.* III. 629D-630A (465–474).

92 See especially *Periph.* III. 629C (453–455).

93 See above pp. 93–94 and 98–99.

94 At *Periph.* III. 628D (422–423) goodness is described as "as though" (*veluti*) a certain genus of being. This perhaps shows that the teacher's meaning has not totally eluded the student.

95 See pp. 94–98.

96 See above pp. 89–91.

97 However, the motion is perhaps that of God's procession and reversion as a whole rather than that of some physical body. Cf. the similar application of the adjective *anarchos* to circularity in a passage that occurs as a marginal note on *Periphyseon* II (PL 122, 562A = Jeauneau, p. 49).

the hierarchy of his prior spiritual guide's enfolded contemplation together with some weakening of the latter. The reader may here be referred to the excellent discussion of this entire topic in Dionysius' *De Divinis Nominibus*, chapter 3.[98]

Excursus: the divine names in "Periphyseōn" books I and II

It will perhaps be recalled that the present investigation began by quoting the student's comment near the beginning of book III of *Periphyseōn* to the effect that the discussion in which he and the teacher had been engaged had referred to the primordial causes so far in a confused and indistinct manner. Given the identification between divine names and primordial causes that is made explicitly near the end of *Periphyseōn* II, we may perhaps conclude by reviewing the passages in books I and II that contain some listing of the Dionysian divine names as a means of determining whether the student's comment was really justified.

The first relevant passage in *Periphyseōn I* occurs in a discussion of the problem raised by the student concerning apparent statements by the holy fathers to the effect that the divine nature not only creates but is created.[99] The teacher begins his argument to resolve this contradiction by noting that, although such names as "Goodness" (*bonitas*),[100] "Being" (*essentia*), and "Truth" (*veritas*) are applied to the divine nature, the appellation that occurs most frequently of all in the sacred writings is that of "God" (*deus*).[101] The discussion continues by noting the etymology that has been adopted from the Greeks according to which the name *theos* ("God") is derived either from the verb *theōrō* meaning "I see" – in which case the derivation indicates that the divine nature sees everything in himself – **[107]** or else from the verb *theō* meaning "I run" – in which case the derivation reveals that the divine nature pervades all things.[102] This etymology points towards a resolution of the contradiction by suggesting a single meaning contained in the two interpretations: namely, the identity between God's making in the sense of seeing all things and his being-made in the sense of running through everything.[103] After a discussion which proceeds from an allusive reference to the names of "Being," "Wisdom," and "Life" in a Trinitarian context[104] – it is deduced by theologians

98 See the remarks in Dionysius: *DDN* 3. 2, 681B (140. 6–12) which constitute a kind of manifesto for the detailed exposition of the divine names that is about to begin.

99 *Periph.* I. 452A-B (417–423). The problem is restated at *Periph.* I. 453C (484–488).

100 In order to avoid a cumbersome exposition in this excursus, the corresponding Latin term will be cited only at the first mention of a given divine name. The use of this term in Eriugena's text may be assumed thereafter, failing any special indication on our part of the contrary situation.

101 *Periph.* I. 452B (430–434).

102 *Periph.* I. 452B-D (436–450).

103 *Periph.* I. 452D (450–453). The etymology only points towards this resolution which is not achieved definitively until *Periph.* I. 453C-454A (481–503).

104 The names occur here not in the usual form of the substantives: *essentia, sapientia, vita* but in that of the verbs: *esse, sapiens esse, vivere*.

from the existence of all things that the divine nature is, from the division of things into essences, genera, species, differences, and individuals that it is wise, and from the stable motion and mobile rest of all things that it lives – to an explicit recollection of Dionysius' attribution of the names of "Unity" (*unitas*), "Trinity" (*trinitas*), and Goodness to the cause of all things,[105] we find a substantial enumeration of divine names. This occurs in connection with Eriugena's formal statement of the distinction between "affirmative" (*kataphatikē*) and "negative" (*apophatikē*) theology where Truth, Goodness, Being, and "Justice"[106] and then Being, Goodness, Truth, Justice, and Wisdom are cited as examples of names in the affirmative mode[107] and where, a few lines later, Being, Goodness, God, Truth, "Eternity,"[108] Wisdom, and Life and then Being, Truth, and Wisdom, and then Truth and Wisdom, and lastly Being, Truth, and Wisdom are used to illustrate the harmonization of the two branches of theology.[109] This argument precedes the lengthy exposition of the ten Aristotelian categories that fills most of *Periphyseōn* I, and it is towards the end of the latter that we find a further enumeration of divine names. Here, discussion of the categories of action and passion gives Eriugena the opportunity of **[108]** considering the attribution to the divine nature of names specifically connoting activity and the relation between subject and object,[110] these being in the first place[111] "Love"[112] – the character of which must be delineated with passing references[113] to the further names of Goodness and "Beauty"[114] – and in the second place[115] "Vision"[116] and "Motion."[117]

There are also numerous relevant passages in *Periphyseōn* II. References to divine names begin to emerge in the discussion of the Trinity – and especially of the relation between the divine and the psychological trinities – that follows the interpretation of the opening verses of *Genesis*.[118] For example, the divine nature is described as Wisdom (the Son) in a discussion of the process of creation,[119] as

105 *Periph.* I. 455C-456C (568–613).

106 *iustitia*.

107 *Periph.* I. 458A-B (674–690) and 458C (699–706). In addition to the usual intelligible names drawn from Dionysius' *De Divinis Nominibus,* Eriugena here also introduces some of the names drawn from the sensible sphere in *De Caelesti Hierarchia*. These are: Light, Sun. Star, Spirit, Water, Lion, Bear, Worm.

108 *aeternitas*.

109 *Periph.* I. 459D-460B (748–776), 460C-461A (785–799), 461C-D (831–843), and 462A-D (854–884).

110 *Periph.* I. 518B-524B (3271–3496).

111 *Periph.* 519B-520B (3303–3348).

112 *amor*.

113 *Periph.* I. 520B (3344–3345).

114 *pulchritudo*.

115 *Periph.* I. 521C-522A (3396–3418).

116 *visio*.

117 *motus*.

118 This interpretation makes extensive reference to the primordial causes without identifying them explicitly with divine names. On the relation between these causes and the divine names, see the discussion in the main part of the present essay.

119 *Periph.* II. 559A-B (1051–1062).

Unity and Trinity within a statement of the Trinitarian dogma,[120] and as "Power"[121] (the Son) and Eternity (the Holy Spirit) in a report of Maximus the Confessor's teaching.[122] The non-Trinitarian doctrine of divine names re-emerges in a passage where the student's question about the difference between the divine and human trinities with respect to their creative activities leads to a discussion of the creation *de nihilo* ("from nothing") exclusive to the former.[123] Through the application of further Graeco-Latin etymologies, the teacher here derives the divine name of *bonitas* ("Goodness") both from the verb *boō* ("I cry out") and the verb *kalō* ("I call") in order to signify the Creator's calling of all things from non-being to being "by an intelligible cry" (*intelligibili clamore*).[124] A further comment by the student about the difference between the divine and human **[109]** trinities with respect to their cognitive activities leads to a discussion of the question whether God understands of himself *quid sit* ("what he is").[125] Recalling his earlier arguments denying the proper application of the categories to God, the teacher explains that God as infinite does not undergo the self-limitation of knowing what he himself is, and that the divine name of *essentia* ("Being") consequently does not correspond to any determinate notion of substance.[126] However, it is only when the formal discussion of the so-called second species of Nature – the primordial causes – begins towards the end of *Periphyseōn* II that we find substantial enumerations of the divine names. Here, after a reprise of the earlier Trinitarian discussion in which the divine names of Unity, Trinity, Goodness, Power, Eternity and Being re-emerge,[127] Eriugena embarks on an extended translation and paraphrase of selected passages in Dionysius' *De Divinis Nominibus*. From this point onwards assuming the identification of the primordial causes and the divine names,[128] the teacher mentions in the following order:[129] Goodness, Being, Life, Wisdom, Truth, "Intellect,"[130] "Reason,"[131] Power, Justice, "Salvation,"[132] "Greatness,"[133] "Omnipotence,"[134] Eternity, and

120 *Periph.* II. 567B (1302–1307).
121 *virtus*.
122 *Periph.* II. 568B-C (1332–1334).
123 *Periph.* II. 580A-B (1715–1732).
124 *Periph.* II. 580C-581A (1733–1755).
125 *Periph.* II. 586A-B (1936–1949).
126 *Periph.* II. 586B-587C (1950–1992). In referring to God here as not just infinity but "more than infinity" (*plus quam infinitas*), Eriugena introduces a terminology suggesting that infinity also is a divine name. However, there is no authority in Dionysius for precisely this handling of infinity.
127 *Periph*. II. 607B-608A (2783–2819).
128 This identification is shown by the prefix *per se ipsam* ("in itself") attached to each term. The rationale for the identification will be explained near the beginning of book III.
129 *Periph.* II. 616C (3168–3178).
130 *intellectus*.
131 *ratio*.
132 *salus*.
133 *magnitudo*.
134 *omnipotentia*.

"Peace,"[135] adding almost immediately the further sequence:[136] Goodness, Being, Life, Wisdom, Intellect, and Reason. A passage from *DDN* chapter 11[137] mentioning the names Being, Life, "Deity,"[138] Goodness, and "Beauty,"[139] and two **[110]** passages from *DDN* chapter 5[140] mentioning the names Being, Life, "Similarity,"[141] Unity, and "Order,"[142] and the names Being, Life, "Immortality,"[143] Wisdom, Order, "Harmony,"[144] Power, "Protection,"[145] "Gathering,"[146] "Distribution,"[147] Intellect, Reason, "Sense,"[148] "Condition,"[149] "Rest,"[150] Motion, Unity, "Judgment,"[151] "Amity,"[152] "Agreement,"[153] "Distinction,"[154] and "Determination"[155] provide the textual authority.[156]

In conclusion, our survey of the passages in books I and II of *Periphyseōn* that include some listing of the Dionysian divine names might suggest that Eriugena's earlier ordering of the primordial causes has indeed exhibited the indistinctness mentioned by the student. However, although an orderly discussion of the doctrine of divine names as a whole is lacking in the earlier part of the treatise, many of these names occur incidentally within discussions of other topics that are themselves presented in an orderly manner. In fact, the criteria for selection and arrangement of the divine names might be summarized as follows. First, scriptural authority plays a role: for example, when exploring the etymology of the name of God early in book I. Second, the selection and arrangement of names is influenced by the broader context of discussion. Thus, a discussion of creation brings the name of Goodness to the forefront, the references to the Trinity establish Unity, Power, and Eternity as a primal triad of names, and the explanation of the Categories shifts the focus to the name of Being. **[111]** Third, the inclusion

135 *pax*.
136 *Periph.* II. 616C-D (3178–3184).
137 Dionysius, *DDN* 11. 6, 953C-956B (222.3–223.14).
138 *deitas*. The context also includes the nearly synonymous "divinity" (*divinitas*) and "deification" (*deificatio*).
139 *forma* translating the Greek *kallos*. Compare the translation *pulchritudo* employed earlier.
140 Dionysius, *DDN* 5. 5, 820B-C (184. 6–16) and 5. 6–7, 820D-821C (184.21–185.25).
141 *similitudo*.
142 *ordinatio*. The synonym "order" (*ordo*) occurs in the next quotation.
143 *immortalitas*.
144 *armonia*.
145 *custodia*.
146 *collocatio*.
147 *distributio*.
148 *sensus*.
149 *habitus*.
150 *status*.
151 *iudicium*.
152 *amicitia*.
153 *compactio*.
154 *discretio*.
155 *terminus*.
156 *Periph.* II. 617A-620A (3194–3281).

of quotations from Dionysius is significant: for instance, when enumerating the primordial causes near the end of book II. The fact that the criteria for the selection and arrangement of divine names in the earlier part of Eriugena's treatise on Nature seem to be primarily of a contextual kind perhaps reinforces the implicit conclusions that the teacher will eventually draw in book III. Stated simply, these are that there are both hermeneutical and logical principles at work in establishing the order of the primordial causes and that the hermeneutical principles ultimately play the primary role.

For the reader's convenience, the relation between the discussions of the ordering of the primordial causes in books I-II and in book III may now be presented in tabular form. The causes are listed in the alphabetical order of their Latin names together with their Greek equivalents in Dionysius' writings. The numbering in parentheses indicates those names that recur in the systematic presentation of the third book and their order of enumeration at that point.

Eriugena's inventory of primordial causes

aeternitas	X	*aiōn*
amicitia		*philia*
amor	XII	*erōs*
armonia		*harmonia*
beatitudo	VIII	*makariotēs*[157]
bonitas	I	*agathotēs*
collocatio		*hidrusis*
compactio		*epharmogē*
custodia		*phroura*
deus		*theos*
deificatio		*theōsis*
deitas theotēs.		
discretio		*diakrisis*
distributio		*dianomē*
essentia (esse)	II	*on, einai* **[112]**
forma		*kallos*[158]
habitus		*hexis*
immortalitas		*athanasia*
intellectus	V	*noēsis*
iudicium		*krisis*[159]

157 This Greek term does not occur in *DDN*. However, cf. Dionysius: *De Caelesti Hierarchia* 3. 2, 165C (19.3) = Eriugena: *Versio Dionysii, PL* 122, 1045B.

158 For the unusual Latin translation of this term, see *Iohannis Scotti Eriugenae Periphyseon, liber secundus*, ed. I. P. Sheldon-Williams (Dublin: The Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1972), p. 250, n. 571.

159 This term represents a faulty reading (in place of *krasis* = "mixture") in Eriugena's text of Dionysius. See the note in Sheldon Williams, *ed. cit*., p. 251, n. 610.

iustitia		*dikaiosunē*
magnitudo	XI	*megethos*
motus		*kinēsis*
omnipotentia		*(to) pantodunamon*
ordinatio		*taxiarchia*
ordo		*taxis*
pax	XIII	*eirēnē*
perfectio	XV	*(to) teleion*
pulchritudo		*kallonē*
ratio	IV	*logos*
salus		*sōtēria*
sapientia	VI	*sophia*
sensus		*aisthēsis*
similitudo		*homoiotēs*
status		*stasis*
terminus		*horos*
trinitas		*trias*
unitas	XIV	*henas*
veritas	IX	*alētheia*
virtus	VII	*dunamis*
visio		*horasis*
vita (vivere)	III	*zōē*.

9

ERIUGENA AND HEIDEGGER

An encounter

[559] The somewhat provocative title of this essay has been chosen in order to indicate the enactment of a confrontation between Heidegger and Neoplatonism. This enactment will exemplify the destruction of the history of philosophy proposed by Heidegger in *Being and Time* and re-labeled the "deconstruction" of the text of philosophy by Jacques Derrida. However, we must begin by **[560]** asking why Heidegger himself never undertook such a destruction or deconstruction.[1]

In paragraph 110 of his fertile but puzzling *Contributions to Philosophy* (*Of Enowning*), Heidegger makes his most extensive analysis of the history of Platonism under the heading of "*Idea*, Platonism, and Idealism." He begins with a discussion of ancient philosophy. Here, he notes that the term *idea* became current in the sense of a "shining-forth" that offers a view, and specifically a shining-forth that provides "stability in presencing."[2] This *idea* – conceived as a unity opposed to multiplicity – was understood as the "common" (*koinon*) and as the "most-being" (*ontōs on*).[3] According to Heidegger, attempts to go beyond this to the *epekeina tēs ousias* ("the 'Beyond-Being'") went no further than the designation of beingness as such in relation to man: *i.e*. as the *agathon* ("befittingness"), since the only question concerned beings and their beingness and there was never an encounter with Being (*Seyn*) itself.[4] In ancient philosophy, there were comparable developments with respect to man. In Heidegger's opinion, the notion of *psuchē* gathered its own essence of being in accordance with the notion of *idea* as common and as most-being. Moreover, given that soul did not yet represent

1 Throughout this essay, the symbol "G" followed by a number gives the pagination in whichever original German edition of Heidegger's text has been cited in the first footnote mentioning the said work.

2 Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, trans. P. Emad and K. Maly (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999), § 110, 145–155 (*Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)* = *Gesamtausgabe* 65, Frankfurt: Klostermann 1994, 208–222). See especially subsection # 1 – Conveniently for us, Heidegger divides this extensive paragraph into 27 subsections (together with several digressions separately numbered).

3 *CP* § 110, subs. ## 2–4. In subs. # 19, Heidegger notes that the Platonic *chōrismos* ("separation") is also established as a being through the emphasis placed on the *idea* as common.

4 subs. # 5.

subjectivity in the modern sense, it influenced the notion of being in the sense of objectivity.[5]

After some briefer remarks regarding patristic and medieval thought in which he notes that the *epekeina tēs ousias* acquired a primarily theological sense, that Christianity adopted the Platonic position without deeper reflection, and that medieval thought **[561]** elaborated the Platonic viewpoint – either in the direction of realism by investing reality in the generic, or in that of nominalism by investing reality in the individual – ,[6] Heidegger turns to modernity with special reference to German Idealism At the beginning of the modern period, the notion of the individual soul as what is most-being made the formula *cogito ergo sum* possible and shortly thereafter, the shining-forth of the Greek *idea* and the beingness of beings associated with it became representedness.[7] Although Heidegger speaks of Platonism as turning into Idealism at this point, he follows Nietzsche's example of including also the modern developments under the rubric of "Platonism."[8] Thus, the entire history of Western philosophy from Plato to Nietzsche can be understood as the domination of the Platonic viewpoint, the latter being now defined as the question that inquires into the beingness of beings and situates the being thus grasped within a relation to representation.[9]

At this point in *Contributions to Philosophy*, Heidegger states that the primary philosophical task is to initiate the overcoming of Platonism and makes certain very interesting suggestions about how this task might be accomplished.[10] However, given that his notion of Platonism is confined to an essentially Nietzschean schematic reinforced with a limited set of Heideggerian presuppositions, the possibility of a philosophically cogent and historically sensitive destruction or deconstruction is hampered from the start. It is for these reasons that the project of the present essay is the more urgent.[11]

5 subs. ## 6–7.

6 subs. ## 8–12.

7 subs. ## 13–14. In *CP* § 103, 141 (G 202), Heidegger notes that Augustine had anticipated this tendency.

8 *CP* § 110, subs. ## 15–19 and 22.

9 subs. # 17. Cf. *CP* § 100, 136–137 (G 195). In *CP* § 110, subs. ## 17–19, Heidegger explains that this history of Western philosophy is also the history of a certain "guiding-question" (*Leitfrage*) about the beingness of beings. Cf. *CP* § 106, 143 (G 205) and p. 598 below.

10 subs. ## 21 and 25. Heidegger inserts an important discussion of the notion of transcendence associated especially with Platonism in subs. # 20. He distinguishes five types of transcendence, contrasting all of them with the "crossing" that he himself advocates.

11 On the history of Platonism contained in Heidegger's *Contributions to Philosophy*, one should now consult Jean -Marc Narbonne, *Hénologie, ontologie, et* Ereignis (*Plotin – Proclus – Heidegger*) (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2001), 187 ff. After an excellent discussion of Plotinus earlier in the book, Narbonne seems mainly intent on proving that Heidegger's history of Platonism is flawed and that his philosophy is unsatisfactory. Regarding the first point, it could perhaps be argued that, although Heidegger was a poor historian with respect to the history of philosophy in the *Contributions*, he was nevertheless a good *philosopher* of that history. The validity of the second point

[562] In the discussion that now follows, we will attempt to avoid the pitfall of somewhat feeble or perhaps even meaningless generality by staging a confrontation between the twentieth-century German thinker and one carefully selected representative of the Platonic tradition. That representative is Eriugena: a thinker whom we would nowadays call a *Neo*-Platonist or a *medieval* Platonist. The method to be pursued is less typical of Heidegger, given that the philosophical confrontation is not that between what Heidegger himself terms "the first beginning" – the pre-Socratic thought that he prized so highly – and "the other beginning."[12] However, it is typical of Heidegger, at least in the sense that our juxtaposition of Heidegger and Eriugena will perhaps reflect those "seemingly disconnected starts unknown to one another" that stem from the abyssal character of the question of Being itself.[13] The present essay will be divided into two main sections: first, an outline of Heidegger's main position followed by an outline of Eriugena's main position in order to reveal a general structural opposition; and second, a comparison of Heidegger's and Eriugena's positions in alternation in order to reveal a series of structural intersections.[14] It is hoped that the result will be an encounter revealing unprecedented aspects of two different but equally outstanding thinkers.

But before proceeding to this analysis, we must draw attention to the fact that the historical or literary connections between Heidegger and Eriugena are slight in the extreme. Although the **[563]** German thinker mentions the work of his medieval predecessor as an example of medieval system-building in *Schelling's Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom*, there seems to be no direct evidence of philosophical influence.[15] However, the absence of a significant historical and literary connection actually permits our strategy of juxtaposing Heidegger and Eriugena to be implemented with greater clarity. It is undeniable that Heidegger did at one point early in his career turn his attention to the so-called "medieval mysticism."[16] An announcement of future work in this field appears in the final chapter of his *Habilitationsschrift*. There are surviving notes of a lecture course entitled "Philosophical Foundations of Medieval Mysticism" scheduled for

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depends more on the individual viewpoint of the reader and will be neither endorsed nor challenged here.

12 Heidegger calls the thinking enactment of the relation between them "the playing-forth" (*das Zuspiel*). See *CP* § 3, 7 (G 9).

13 *CP* § 44, 66 (G 95) *scheinbar zusammenhangslosen und sich unbekannten Anläufen.* Cf. *CP* § 42, 59 (G 85).

14 A briefer concluding section will consider a possible re-orientation of our discussion by exploring an important parallel motif in the two thinkers.

15 See Heidegger, *Schelling's Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom*, trans. J. Stambaugh (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1985), p. 28 (*Schelling: Vom Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit*, *GA* 42 [Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1988], p. 49). Although the reference to Eriugena was in this instance probably suggested by Schelling, Heidegger could have derived the rough characterization of the former's work from some historical-philosophical handbook.

16 For the details that follow, see Heidegger, *The Phenomenology of Religious Life*, trans. M. Fritsch and J. A. Gosetti-Ferencei (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2004), pp. 229–263 (*Phänomenologie des religiösen Lebens, GA* 60 [Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1995], pp. 301–351).

presentation at Freiburg during the winter semester 1919–1920 but never given. These notes were written fairly quickly between August 10 and August 14, 1919. There also survives a letter of Heidegger to the university authorities requesting permission to replace this course with another on the grounds that the necessary preparatory work had not been completed. These brief notes on medieval mysticism contain a number of points of interest. In the section headed "Construction (Starting-Points)," Heidegger introduces certain ideas typical of Meister Eckhart such as the birth of God in the human soul and the attitude of releasement without attributing these specifically to the medieval writer.[17] In the section headed "Irrationality in Meister Eckhart," he notes the importance of such ideas as the denial of time and multiplicity with respect to the divine, the metaphysical interpretation of the names of God, the question of the relative priorities of intellect and will, and the notion of the soul's ground.[18] The upshot of all this is that one could include a **[564]** literary and historical analysis of the relation between Heidegger and *Eckhart* within the enactment of a confrontation between the two writers. In fact, this has already been done by such modern scholars as Reiner Schürmann and John D. Caputo.[19] By contrast, a confrontation between Heidegger and *Eriugena* must be more abstract in nature, although Heidegger's awareness of the mystical tradition in general could represent its undercurrent.[20]

17 *PRL* 235.

18 *PRL* 239–241.

19 For the relation between Heidegger and the "mystical tradition" (*i.e.* Eckhart primarily), see John D. Caputo, *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1978) and Sonya Sikka, *Forms of Transcendence: Heidegger and Medieval Mystical Theology* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997). The former work includes careful analyses of Heidegger's *Releasement* and *The Principle of Reason* and is only marred by a misunderstanding of Heidegger's *Ereignis.* The latter contains numerous valid and interesting points albeit in a somewhat chaotic overall presentation. It is in exploring the notion of "releasement" that Heidegger comes closest to Eckhart (at least the Eckhart of the German writings), and this connection has given rise to abundant scholarship. See Reiner Schürmann, "Heidegger and Meister Eckhart on Releasement," *Research in Phenomenology* 3 (1973), pp. 95–119; id. "Trois penseurs de délaissement: Maître Eckhart, Heidegger, Suzuki," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 12 (1974), pp. 455–477 (pt. 1) and *ibid*. 13 (1975), pp. 43–60 (pt. 2).

20 The following passage from Heidegger's essay "My Pathway Hitherto" (written around the time of the *Contributions to Philosophy* (1936–1938)) narrates the development of Heidegger's ideas in the decade after *Being and Time.* It deals especially with his increasing awareness of the onefold of the historical and fundamental mindfulness of the grounding-question – *i.e.* of the meaning of Being – and speaks volumes for the potential fruitfulness of staging an encounter between Heidegger and a medieval Platonist. "And who would not want to recognize that a confrontation with Christianity reticently accompanied my entire path hitherto, a confrontation that was not and is not a 'problem' that one 'takes up' to address but a preservation of, and *at the same time* a painful separation from, one's ownmost provenance: the parental home, homeland, and youth? Only the one who was so rooted in such an actually lived Catholic world may be able to have an inkling of the necessities that like subterranean quakes have been at work in the pathway of my inquiry hitherto. Moreover, the Marburg period offered a profound experience of a Protestant Christianity – all of which had to be overcome from the ground up but not destroyed. It is not proper to speak of these most inward confrontations since

[565] Now in staging a confrontation between the twentieth-century German thinker and the Platonic tradition, there are good reasons for choosing Eriugena – a writer whom Heidegger does not engage directly – rather than Augustine. As is well known, Heidegger made a careful reading of book X of Augustine's *Confessions* the centerpiece of his course on "Augustine and Neoplatonism" given at Freiburg in the summer semester of 1921 and finally published in 1995.[21] However, a primary purpose of disengaging Augustine from his Neoplatonic background emerges from this material – this being in order to present a "phenomenological" reading of his chosen author as a counter to earlier interpretations such as that of Dilthey[22] – whereas a primary purpose of emphasizing the Neoplatonic tendencies of Augustine is the hallmark of Eriugena's philosophical speculation. Therefore, the choice of Augustine over Eriugena as a means of accurately delineating Heidegger's relation to the Neoplatonic tradition would introduce so many complications of a historical, textual, and conceptual nature needing to be addressed that we would be in serious danger of losing our way entirely.[23] Nevertheless, there are one or two points at which a brief reference to the Augustine-Heidegger trajectory could be in order.[24]

Heidegger

It is clear to any reader of the Introductions to *Being and Time* that Heidegger's thinking as a whole represents an individual **[566]** enactment of certain hermeneutic principles based on phenomenological foundations.[25] Especially when read with a view to the inter-textual encounter that we have proposed, an articulation of

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they do not revolve around issues that concern the dogma of Christianity and articles of faith, but rather around the sole question: whether god is fleeing from us or not and whether we, as creating ones, still experience this flight genuinely" (Heidegger, *Mindfulness*, trans. P. Emad and T. Kalary (London-New York: Continuum, 2006), p. 368 (*Besinnung, GA* 66 [Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1997], p. 415).

21 *PRL* 113–227.

22 See *PRL* 121–125.

23 The lectures on the *Confessions* book X do, of course, provide priceless indications of the early development of Heidegger's ideas: *i.e.* regarding *Dasein*, Care, and so forth. For a recent study of this material see Friedrich-Wilhelm von Hermann, "Die 'Confessiones' des Heiligen Augustinus im Denken Heideggers," in *Heidegger e i medievali. Atti del Colloquio Internazionale Cassino 10/13 maggio 2000*, eds. C. Esposito and P. Porro, *Quaestio 1* (2001), 113–146.

24 For example, it is worth noting that Heidegger also acknowledged the influence of Augustine's doctrine of time as "extension of the mind" (*distentio animi*) on his own notion of the "ecstasies" of time. See Augustine, *Conf.* XI. 20, 26. For a list of the relevant passages in Heidegger's writings, see von Hermann [n. 23], 136–137. The issue is of the greatest philosophical importance although not particularly relevant to the task of the present essay.

25 Heidegger's philosophy concentrates primarily on meaning. This is why he considers the raising of the question concerning the meaning of Being – as in *Being and Time* – to be his most important innovation. See "My Pathway Hitherto" 367 (G 414). In *Contributions to Philosophy* he equates the "meaning" (*Sinn*) of Being with the "truth" (*Wahrheit*) of Being and defines the inquiry into such matters as "mindfulness" (*Besinnung*). See *CP* § 16, 31 (G 43–44).

this thinking along four interpretative trajectories seems to be the most promising: namely, those of Being, *Dasein*, Language, and Time. Each of these terms represents at the same time a disclosure of the meaning of the term in itself and a means of the disclosure of meaning in the other terms.[26] For example, what is disclosed as *Dasein* can be a means for disclosing Being or Language or the disclosing relation between them. Moreover, each of these disclosures takes an individual form which it is the primary task of philosophy to investigate. For instance, the disclosure of Being involves the disclosure of the relation between Being and *Dasein* as one of reciprocal dependence. On the basis of our discussions in the next part of this essay, there will be reason to hope that in thinking along the interpretative trajectories of Being, *Dasein*, Language, and Time we have entered his hermeneutic circle at the best point.

According to the position that Heidegger makes clear in his *Letter on Humanism*, it is equally true that Being is dependent on *Dasein* and that *Dasein* is dependent on Being.[27] This position, **[567]** is possible because it had already been established in *Being and Time* that both "Being" (*Sein*) and "beings" (*das Seiende*) are quite distinct from "the real" (reale, realia) – *i.e.* real things – if not from "reality" (*Realität*).[28] On the one hand, Being is dependent on *Dasein* because Being requires at least one individual *Dasein* able to project it open.[29] On the other hand, *Dasein* is dependent on Being because Being has already been projected

26 In this essay, we will use the contrast of "disclosure" and "concealment" (more elegant in English) rather than that of) "disclosure" and "un-disclosure" or "un-concealment" and "concealment" (closer to the structure of Heidegger's German). Heidegger himself uses a variety of terms to express these notions, and the vocabulary of *Being and Time* differs from that of the later writings. Nevertheless, we will take the risk of simplification in order to articulate the main lines of Heidegger's "phenomenology" with the greatest clarity.

27 In order to render what follows more readily comprehensible, it would be useful to supply a definition of "Being" as understood by Heidegger in advance. Unfortunately, such a project cannot be realized, since the main feature of Heidegger's "Being" is that it cannot be presented in terms of any static formula. As Heidegger states at *CP* § 36, 54 (G 78), the truth of Being cannot be said in ordinary language that is the language of beings, although the best thing is to say the language of beings "as" (*als*) the language of Being. In addition to the modes of approaching Being to be detailed later in the present essay, one should here perhaps note: *a.* the writing of the word *Sein* under the cross of cancellation, in order to indicate the *interpretative* nature of Being, and *b.* the use of the archaic spelling *Seyn* of the same word, in order to suggest the *historical* nature of Being. To simplify things somewhat, Heidegger's notion of Being may be said *i.* to represent a realm of meanings (although not meanings conceived "linguistically" as opposed to things); *ii.* to have a particularly close relation to temporality, and *iii.* to include negation within itself (as opposed to representing something that can be negated), these criteria governing the distinction of "Being" from "beings" that is called the "ontological difference" in some of Heidegger's earlier works. On all three points, as we shall see, Heidegger's approach is diametrically opposed to Eriugena's.

28 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), § 43, 255 (*Sein und Zeit* [Tübingen: Niemeyer, 11 Aufl. 1967], pp. 211–212).

29 *Ibid*.

open by some other individual *Dasein*.[30] Moreover, Being and beings and the difference between them – the difference that is called "the ontological difference" (*die ontologische Differenz*)[31] in some of Heidegger's earlier writings – are both established by *Dasein*. This difference has mainly to do with the respective relations of Being and beings to meaning or truth and to time or temporality.[32] In the case of **[568]** Being, the meaning or truth that defines it is not restricted to that of statements and the time or temporality defining it not restricted to presence. In addition, Being is convertible with the difference itself whereas beings are not.[33]

The Being – as opposed to beings – that enters into the reciprocal relation with *Dasein* is discussed in detail in one of Heidegger's most important historical studies of the late 1930s: the *Introduction to Metaphysics*. Near the beginning of this text, Heidegger addresses the question of Being by arguing that the meaning of the word "being" is extremely vague for us, although we are certain that being is distinct from non-being.[34] Towards the end of the book, he notes that the vagueness of the term "being" and the clear distinction from non-being have the status of something which he terms a belonging-together in a unity in which something unprecedented occurs.[35] Between these two discussions of Being, Heidegger pursues many investigative detours in which a grammatical analysis of the use of the infinitive *einai/Sein* with and without the definite article is combined with an etymological analysis of the three stems discovered in the inflections of the Greek and German words.[36] These discussions are followed by a semantic analysis of various usages of the copulative "is" leading to an important conclusion. This is that the multiple usages of the word "being" depend not on a multiplicity of different beings to which reference is made but on a multiplicity latent in the word's "folding" (*Faltung*).[37] Moreover, this multiplicity of usages has not been the result of an arbitrary linguistic convention but is linked by a single determinate trait directing our understanding to a definite horizon in which the verbal substantive

30 "Letter on Humanism," trans. F. A. Capuzzi in *Pathmarks*, ed. W. McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 256–257 (*Wegmarken*, 2. Aufl. [Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1978], pp. 333–334).

31 The actual term "ontological difference" is first introduced in *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, trans. A. Hofstadter (Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1982), §22, 318 (*Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie, GA* 58 [Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1992], pp. 452–453) although the notion corresponding to it underlies *Being and Time*. See also "On the Essence of Ground," trans. W. McNeill in *Pathmarks*, 105–106 (G 132–133). In his later writings, Heidegger prefers to replace this expression redolent of metaphysical thinking with a variety of *quasi*-synonyms.

32 See p. 570 and n. 52–for Heidegger, preoccupation with beings rather than Being (equivalent to the "forgetfulness" (*Vergessenheit*) of Being) amounts to a failure to ask the question of the meaning of Being. On time and the difference, see p. 573.

33 On the convertibility of Being and Difference, see p. 583.

34 Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1959), pp. 35–37 (*Einführung in die Metaphysik,* Tübingen: Niemeyer, 3. Aufl. 1966, 27–28).

35 *IM* 81–82 (G 62).

36 *IM* 54–70 (G 42–54) and *IM* 70–74 (G 54–56).

37 *IM* 89–91 (G 68–69).

"Being" is subordinated to the third person of the present indicative "is" (*ist*).[38] **[569]** The references to folding and to the "is" are particularly important, since they point to the difference that Heidegger elsewhere emphasizes between the "essential sway of Being" (*das Wesen des Seyns*) – exhibiting a certain duality – and beings.[39]

A *quasi*-definition of Being – as opposed to beings – at the end of *Introduction to Metaphysics* as the "basic happening" (*Grundgeschehnis*) that makes possible historical *Dasein* amid the disclosure of beings as a whole[40] brings us to the other *relatum* mentioned earlier: namely, *Dasein*. For Heidegger at this point, *Dasein* is the particular being that poses questions. Moreover, *Dasein* itself implies awareness of being and, since it especially poses the question: Why are there beings *rather than* nothing? – and not simply the question: Why are there beings? – , *Dasein* places itself in a kind of "oscillation" (*Schwanken*) between being and non-being.[41] This means that *Dasein* also puts itself as questioner into question. Now it is not possible to summarize the extensive discussion of *Dasein* in *Being and Time* that is assumed here.[42] We will simply note that *Dasein* is disclosed as a being already defined by its entanglement within a world of concerns that is called "being-in-the-world" (*In-der-Welt-Sein*),[43] these disclosures including primarily the sheer facticity of its "moods/attunements" (*Stimmungen*)[44] and the free projecting-open of its "understanding" (*Verstehen*).[45] Because *Dasein* is inherently orientated to the future in its projecting-open of possibilities,[46] it can only be conceived as a whole by anticipating the ultimate limit of those possibilities,[47] the mood **[570]** for *Dasein'* s anticipation being "anxiety" (*Angst*),[48] and the limit understood being death.[49] Without going into too much further detail, one can

38 *IM* 52 and 91–92 (G 40 and 69).

39 See below.

40 *IM* 201 (G 153–154).

41 *IM* 27–29 (G 21–23). For more information on the types of question that Heidegger envisions see below.

42 For the notion of *Dasein* presupposed in *Introduction to Metaphysics*, see *BT*, intro, I, §§ 2, 26–27 (G 7) and 4, 32–35 (G 11–15).

43 *BT* § 12, 79–80 (G 54).

44 See *BT* §§ 29–30, 172–182 (G 134–142) and § 34, 203 (G 160–161). Moods/attunements in general are equivalent to the *existentiale* of state-of-mind. See pp. 574–575 below.

45 See *BT* § 32, 188–191 (G 148–150).

46 See below pp. 574–575 and. n. 69.

47 *BT* § 45, 276 (G 233).

48 *BT* § 40, 228–235 (G 184–191). On the relation between anxiety and nothingness, see p. 582.

49 *BT* § 62, 356 (308). See *BT* § 53, 307 (G 262) on death as the purest possibility *i.e.* a possibility that can never be experienced in actuality by the individual *Dasein* whose death it is. On the important theme of "Being-Towards-Death") (*Sein zum Tode*) in *Being and Time* see *BT* § 65, 372–373 (G 325). Because *Dasein* achieves its wholeness in death, the primary temporal *ecstasis* is the future. See p. 574 below.

see that the *Dasein* central to *Being and Time* has only a formal analogy with the notion of subjectivity prevalent in traditional metaphysics.

Much of the above argument implies the further idea that Time has a disclosing relation to Being, Time here being understood more readily on the basis of the "temporality" (*Zeitlichkeit*) that constitutes the dynamism of *Dasein* than on that of the derivative time-flow associated with beings. Although the elaboration of this idea is the declared aim of *Being and Time*, the incompleteness of the latter project had left its reader somewhat in the dark regarding the precise relation between Being and *its* peculiar "Temporality" (*Temporalität*).[50] An early intimation of what Heidegger had in mind can be obtained by combining an argument in *Being and Time* with a parallel argument in *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, a Marburg lecture-course intended as a reworking of *Being and Time's* unwritten "Division 3." The first argument takes its starting point from a reflection on the medieval Aristotelian notion of transcendence, and concludes that Being is "the *transcendens* pure and simple" (*das transcendens schlechthin*) in the sense that Being has priority to everything else.[51] The second argument is rooted in a consideration of the Kantian notion of the *a priori*, and concludes that temporality is the condition of possibility of transcendence in the sense of *Dasein's* understanding of Being.[52] **[571]** In practice, Heidegger works out the implications of these ideas in all his later works. For example, when he argues in *Contributions to Philosophy* that the difference between Being and *a* being is that the former "holds sway" (*west*) and is not limited to "presence" (*Anwesenheit*) – opening up in the "momentariness" (*Augenblicklichkeit*) of *Dasein*'s leap ahead – whereas the latter "is" (*ist*) and is confined to presence, he is obviously employing Temporality as the determinative feature of Being and its constitutive difference.[53]

Now it is probably safe to say that Language plays a pivotal role throughout Heidegger's *oeuvre* and especially in his commentaries on Hölderlin and certain later works. This is because it is possible to treat Language as meaningfully equivalent not only to Being but also to *Dasein* and Time. In fact, Language acquires *de facto* a certain priority to Being in Heidegger's thinking.[54] This is shown by the facts that Language as the semantically richer notion tends to impart its characteristics to the Being with which it is meaningfully equivalent rather than the reverse, that the hermeneutical assumptions together with the notions of truth and meaning that underpin this thinking are inescapably *linguistic*[55] and that the most

50 Heidegger makes a distinction between two terms: *Zeitlichkeit* which is specific to *Dasein* and *Temporalität* which is specific to Being. See *BT* Intro II,§ 5, 40 (G 19) and *BPP* § 22, 322–330. Since "temporality" is the best English translation in either case, it is best to distinguish the former from the latter with initial lower-case and capital T, respectively.

51 *BT* intro. II, § 7, 62 (G 38).

52 *BPP* § 22, 318 (GA 24).

53 *CP* § 34, 52 (G 74–75). Cf. *CP* § 10, 22 (G 30).

54 We say *de facto,* because this is not Heidegger's official position – which is that each of these terms is "equiprimordial" (*gleichursprünglich*) with the other.

55 See n. 25.

fundamental disclosures of Being take place in the word-plays *es gibt, a-lētheia*, and so forth. Of course, a prerequisite for understanding properly the relation of meaningful equivalence or the other disclosing relations in this case would be a summary of what Heidegger means by language. Here, we must content ourselves with noting that in *Being and Time* there is a contrast between "Discourse" (*Rede*) on the one hand – defined as the "totality of significations" (*Bedeutungsganze*) – which underlies the development of the *existentiale* of understanding[56] into the *existentialia* of interpretation and assertion and "Language" (*Sprache*) on the other hand – defined as the "totality of words" (*Wortganzheit*) – which attaches words to the totality of significations in **[572]** such a way that words often become "word-things" (*Wörterdinge*).[57] After *Being and Time*, this doctrine is retained although the terminology is altered. The term "Language" will later be applied to the entire field covered by the earlier Discourse and Language, and a new term "Saying" (*Sagen*) will be applied to the earlier Discourse.

The treatment of Language as meaningfully equivalent to Being may be illustrated in a section of Heidegger's *Nietzsche* entitled "European Nihilism."[58] Here, the writer corrects his own habitual tendency of figuratively representing Language (= Saying) as a bridge connecting two river banks signifying Being and beings respectively, by arguing that Language is really the river that creates the two banks by flowing between them, this Language being termed "an abundance of the sayability of Being" (*ein Reichtum der Sagbarkeit des Seins*).[59] It should here not escape our notice that Language, because of the wave-pattern of the river water in the image, exhibits a kind of twofold dynamic structure An example of the treatment of Language as meaningfully equivalent to *Dasein* is provided by an argumentative thread in the *Letter on Humanism* where Heidegger treats the reciprocal relation between Being and *Dasein* mentioned earlier – the fact that Being is dependent on *Dasein* and *Dasein* upon Being – as parallel to a reciprocal **[573]**

56 At *BT* § 34, 203 (G 161) he says that discourse is equiprimordial with understanding and state-of-mind. Cf. *BT* § 68, 400 (G 349) where discourse is treated as subsequent to understanding, state-of-mind, and falling.

57 See *BT* § 34, 203–204 (G 161), *BT* § 68, 400 (G 349). The connection between discourse, language, and the *existentiale* of interpretation is particularly important, given that the interpretation of phenomena is stated to be the fundamental aim of *Being and Time* as a whole.

58 What we have termed the "meaningful equivalence" between Being and Language is illustrated well by Heidegger's observations at *CP* § 38, 55 (G 79) that one can say Being neither mediately in terms of some enhanced type of logic or dialectic nor immediately because "every saying already speaks *from* within the truth of Being" (*jede Sage spricht schon* aus *der Wahrheit des Seyns*). He goes on to explain that the word of this saying is not a sign for something other than itself, and consequently that "what it names is what it means" (*was es nennt, ist gemeint*). We may perhaps paraphrase this by saying that, in the case of saying and being, we are dealing with a kind of performative utterance in which the content and the mode of saying are one and the same.

59 Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. iv, "Nihilism," trans. F. A. Capuzzi (New York: Harper and Row, 1982), pp. 188, 191 (*Nietzsche*, Pfullingen: Neske, 3. Aufl. 1961, II. 246, 249). To be more precise, Language is here performing the function of the difference between Being and beings (or the "ontological" difference). See n. 31.

relation between Saying and Language.[60] The reciprocal relation in each case is based on the fact that both *Dasein* and Language are disclosed as essentially *historical* in nature. The treatment of Language as meaningfully equivalent to Time is illustrated in a passage of Heidegger's *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry*. Here, the writer exploits the image of the flowing river that creates two banks by flowing between them once again, although the river is here the Time whose flow can be arrested at the point where it opens up into the three dimensions of past, present, and future in order to make discourse possible for human beings rather than Language (Saying), this Time being characterized as "torrential time" (*reissende Zeit*).[61] It is worth noticing that it is now Time that, because of the wave-pattern of the river water in the image, exhibits the twofold dynamic structure mentioned earlier.

The idea that Time has a disclosing relation to *Dasein* is as important for Heidegger as the idea that it has a disclosing relation to Being discussed earlier and indeed forms the presupposition of the latter in the earlier writings.[62] This idea has to be worked out in detail during the discussion of the so-called *existentialia* in *Being and Time*, given that temporality is precisely what makes *Dasein*'s various modes of being possible.[63] For example, when considering the *existentiale* of understanding, Heidegger argues that *Dasein* is not something "present-at-hand" (*ein Vorstandenes)*, nor even something not yet present-at-hand yet capable of becoming present-at-hand, but a "being-possible" (*Möglichsein*) that can never be present at hand.[64] More precisely, **[574]** *Dasein* operates by "projecting-open" (*Entwerfen*) itself upon its "for-the-sake-of-which" (*Worumwillen*) and upon the "Meaningfulness" (*Bedeutsamkeit*) of the world in order to disclose the totality of beings and itself as a being within the totality.[65] Two aspects of the relation between understanding and temporality are worth noting here. First, understanding is to be associated with the temporal dimension of the future rather than with that of the present. Second, authentic understanding is to be distinguished from an inauthentic variety associated with the temporal dimension of the present.[66]

60 *LH* 274–276 (G 358–360). This argument is epitomized in the statement at Heidegger, *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry,* translated by Keith Hoeller, Amherst: Humanity Books 2000, 57 (*Erläuterungen zu Hölderlins Dichtung,* 6. Aufl., Frankfurt: Klostermann 1996, 39–40) that, because of the unity and sameness of the essential word that unites us, "we are one colloquy" (*Wir sind ein Gespräch*). See also *BT* § 34, 208 (G 165).

61 *EHP* 57 (G 39–40).

62 Heidegger argues that temporality is the meaning of "Care" (*Sorge*) at *BT* § 65, 370 (G 323) and of *authentic* Care at *BT* § 65, 374 (G 326), Care itself having already been defined as the wholeness of *Dasein'*s being at *BT* § 39, 223 (G 182).

63 Of course, the ultimate limit of these possibilities and the ultimate possibility itself is death. See above p. 570 and n. 49.

64 *BT* § 31, 183 (G 143).

65 *BT* § 31, 184–186 (G 145).

66 See *BT* § 65, 378 (G 329).

The nature of the temporality that constitutes the dynamism of *Dasein* itself is discussed in two sections of *Being and Time*.[67] The earlier and briefer of the two discussions can be found at *BT* § 65 dealing with temporality as the meaning of Care, where it is explained that temporality is not something that *is* – that is, a being of some kind – but rather "temporalizes itself" (*zeitigt sich*).[68] It corresponds to that externality to self in and for itself that Heidegger terms an "ecstasis" (*Ekstase*) and can be considered as temporalizing in the three different ecstasies of temporality: the future, the past, and the present.[69] With respect to the temporality of Care in general, we can say that from one viewpoint the future is the primary ecstasis, although from another viewpoint all three ecstasies are simultaneous within it.[70] How **[575]** this is possible is explained in the more extended later discussion at *BT* §§ 68–69 dealing with the temporalities of disclosedness in general and of the *existentialia* of understanding, state-of-mind, falling, and discourse in particular. Here, Heidegger argues that the ecstasies are superimposed so that understanding, state-of-mind, and falling are characterized primarily by the ecstasies of future, past, and present, respectively,[71] while each of these *existentialia* also contains the other two ecstasies within itself.[72] He also notes that the relatively dynamic notion of the ecstasis must be correlated with the relatively static notion of an "ecstatic horizon" (*ekstatische Horizont*) in order to explain the relation between the projecting-open and stabilization of meaning and delineate the notion of transcendence.[73]

An illustration of the manner in which the doctrine of the three ecstasies of temporality allows Heidegger to reconfigure traditional philosophical problems can be found in the essay "Anaximander's Saying." Here, he favorably contrasts

67 Heidegger will later render his account of temporality in *Being and Time* more precise *1.* by saying that the "time" described in this work is a "directive to and echo of" (*Anweisung . . . Anklang*) the Truth of the essential swaying of Being. See *CP* § 34, 51 (G 74); *2.* by emphasizing time-space as the "grounding-jointure" (*Grundgefüge*) of the Truth of Being. See *CP* § 10, 22 (G 30). The fullest treatment of both these aspects can be found in the late essay *On Time and Being*. See below.

68 *BT* § 65, 376–377 (G 328).

69 *BT* § 65, 377 (G 328–329).

70 *BT* § 65, 377–378 (G 329). The relation between the three ecstases is worked out in the greatest detail at *BT* § 65, 373–374 (G 326). Here, Heidegger argues *1.* that the past arises from the future. "As authentically futural, Dasein *is* authentically as '*having been*'" (*eigentlich zukünftig* ist *das Dasein eigentlich* gewesen) *i.e.* understood from the point of maximal futurity (= death), *Dasein* is entirely past; *2.* that the present arises from the future and the past. "The future which . . . is in the process of having been, releases from itself the present" (*die . . . gewesende Zukunft die Gegenwart aus sich entlässt*) *i.e.* understood from the point of demarcation between future and past, *Dasein* is somehow "present." Because of this elaboration, Heidegger can define temporality at *BT* § 65, 374 (G 326) as a phenomenon that is "onefold as a future that makes present in the process of having been" (*als gewesend-gegenwärtigende Zukunft einheitlich*).

71 See *BT* § 68, 387 (G 337) for understanding, *BT* § 68, 390 (G 340) for state-of-mind, and *BT* § 68, 397 (G 346) for falling.

72 See the detailed discussion of understanding at *BT* § 68, 387 (G 337–338).

73 *BT* §§ 69, 416–417 (G 364–366). In addition to each ecstasis, Time as a whole can be considered as a horizon for the understanding of Being. See *BT* § 83, 488 (G 437).

the early Greek view of the present as "presenc*ing*" (*das Anwesen*) within the region of disclosed-ness with the later Greek and modern view of the present as a moment of "the Now" (*das Jetzige*) within the stream of time.[74] Considered in terms of the ecstatic theory, this amounts to the privileging of a thoroughly dynamic view of the relation between the ecstasies of the future and the past over the **[576]** exclusively static preoccupation with the ecstasis of the present. The opposition between these two approaches – often characterized as the forgetting of the distinction between presencing and the present – underlies Heidegger's entire reading of the history of philosophy.

In the discussion completed in this section, we have interpreted Heidegger's thinking along the four trajectories of Being, *Dasein*, Language, and Time, each of these terms representing both a disclosing of the meaning in the term itself and a means of disclosure of the meaning in the other terms.[75] Given that Heidegger identifies the inquiry into the meaning of Being with the inquiry into the meaning of Truth, he would probably be willing to apply the expression "the happening of Truth" (*das Geschehnis der Wahreit*) to our totality of intersecting disclosures.[76] The upshot of this is that we have already in practice been interpreting Heidegger's thinking also along a fifth trajectory: namely, that of Truth.

Eriugena

On turning to Eriugena, we discover that everything of which the latter speaks in *Periphyseon* and elsewhere – with one exception to be noted later – exemplifies what Heidegger terms the forgetting of the difference between Being and beings.[77]

74 "Anaximander's Saying," in *Off the Beaten Track*, trans. J. Young and K. Haynes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 261 (*Holzwege*, 5. Aufl., Frankfurt: Klostermann 1972, pp. 319–320).

75 Heidegger himself characterizes the process in general of connecting two or more such terms as "jointure" (*Fuge, Gefüge*): for example, when he says in *Contributions to Philosophy* that philosophy itself is "a jointure in beings as the conjoining enjoined to Being of the Truth of Being)" (*eine Fuge im Seienden als die sich dem Seyn fügende Verfügung über seine Wahrheit*) (*CP* § 5, 9 (G 11)) and that the "contributions" of the work's title always say the sway of Being but will perhaps only be able to accomplish the jointure of the Truth on the basis of Being itself in the future (*CP* § 1, 3 (G 4)). See also *CP* § 23, 42 (G 59) for the jointure of inceptive thinking and for the contrast between jointure and "system." See also *CP* § 10, 22 (G 50) for the grounding jointure of time + space.

76 For this expression, see Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," in *Off the Beaten Track*, 71 (G 59).

77 In this section we will explore the parallels in Eriugena to Heidegger's notions of Being, Language, and Temporality but say somewhat less about *Dasein*. Eriugena as a Christian Neoplatonist naturally has a doctrine of soul, and it would be possible to study the Eriugena's soul and Heidegger's *Dasein* in parallel. Indeed, previous scholars have studied Eckhart's soul and Heidegger's *Dasein* in parallel fashion: for example, see Caputo [n. 17], 18–22, 38, 42–43, 143–145, 156–163. We will not pursue this course here because the topic has already been treated fully and is more relevant to the Eckhart than to the Eriugena parallel. We will simply underline the most important point (applicable to both Eriugena and Eckhart) that Heidegger's *Dasein* differs radically from the medieval Neoplatonic notion of soul in two fundamental ways: first, in Heidegger Being is dependent on *Dasein* whereas in Neoplatonism God is not dependent on the soul; second, in Heidegger the

It may **[577]** seem surprising to conclude that this medieval thinker, who draws attention to the problematic application of the term "being" to God, should deal only with what Heidegger calls "beings" (*das Seiende*) and not with "Being" (*Sein*).[78] This would seem to place excessive emphasis on a combination of passages referring to the "primordial cause" or "divine name" of "Being" (*essentia*),[79] first with passages describing the primordial causes as the second of the four species of Nature: "that which is created and creates" (*quae et creatur et creat*),[80] and secondly with the passages identifying God with this second species at least by implication.[81] One could presumably here object that, according to Eriugena's understanding of the two branches of theology: the *kataphatic* or **[578]** *affirmativa* and the *apophatic* or *abdicativa* borrowed from Dionysius, whereby the affirmative theology applies terms to God "not properly" (*non proprie*) whereas the negative theology "clearly understands" (*clare cognoscens*) the impropriety,[82] God is more a non-being than a being. However, one must also take account of the emanative metaphysic that Eriugena shares with his sources Augustine and Dionysius. According to this viewpoint, reality is a dynamic continuum of which any degree may be described alternatively as being or non-being – as the proverbial glass may be described alternatively as half full or half empty – and where both negation and affirmation can be understood as signifying either an ascending or a descending relation along the continuum. The assumption of such an emanative metaphysic leads inexorably to the notion that non-being in the sense of either excess or deficiency is inseparable from being.[83]

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relation of *Dasein* to Being constitutes *Dasein* itself whereas in Neoplatonism the relation of soul to God is distinct from the soul as such. These conclusions are articulated well by Caputo [n. 19] 105, 125–127, 158, 162–163, 183–184 with respect to Eckhart. In addition, both the Neoplatonic God and soul are metaphysical entities and are related in a moral sense, whereas nothing comparable applies to Heidegger's Being and *Dasein*.

78 In dealing with Eriugena in this section, we will employ the term "Being" (with initial capital *B*) to denote the Form of Being (in the Platonic sense) and the term "being" (with initial lower-case *b*) to signify whatever is real or exists. When referring specifically to Heidegger, the senses of Being/beings exploited earlier will be maintained. According to Heidegger's reading of the history of metaphysics, the Form of Being (in the Platonic sense) and the various beings all imply the notions of most generic + highest being (= "onto-theo-logy").

79 *Iohannis Scotti seu Eriugenae Periphyseon*, ed. É. A. Jeauneau (Turnhout: Brepols, 1996–2006). For example, see *Periph.* III. 621A-B (74–93). Cf. *Periph*. II. 617A-618A (3194–3238), and II. 618C (3256–3264) (all these passages citing Dionysius as the source).

80 See *Periph.* I. 442B (37), II. 529A-B (134–148), etc.

81 At *Periph.* II. 528B (109–119) and III. 621A-C (83–101), God is identified with all four species.

82 *Periph.* I. 461A-D (810–843). Cf. *Periph.* I. 462B-D (858–884).

83 In general, those who have written about the relation between Heidegger and Neoplatonism misunderstand the nature of the (ontological) difference, imagining that somehow the relation between the One or Good and Being corresponds to this difference, that there is consequently a radical distinction between Neoplatonic "henology" and traditional onto-theo-logy, and that Heidegger's ignorance of Neoplatonism made him think that his own account of the difference was something new. For a good illustration of this approach, see Klaus Kremer, "Zur ontologischen Differenz. Plotin und Heidegger," *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung* 43 (1989), pp. 673–694. For the

It seems certain that both "God" (*deus*) and "Nature" (*Phusis/Natura*) are considered by Eriugena as beings rather than Being in Heidegger's sense and that, given that his idealism is of the pre-Kantian kind, the status of God and Nature as intellective subjects or objects cannot be defined in independence of their **[579]** status as beings. Moreover when *Periphyseon* refers to God as above (or cause of) being, or when it refers to God as non-being, or when it refers to God as above (or cause of) both being and non-being, the discussion is still referring exclusively to beings in Heidegger's sense. We will begin by briefly considering some passages describing God from each of these viewpoints.

God is described as above (or cause of) being throughout the discussion of the order of the primordial causes near the beginning of *Periphyseon III* where "Being" (*essentia*) is enumerated as the *second* of the primordial causes.[84] But despite the seeming assumption of this discussion that something has precedence over being, one must recall an interchange[85] within the somewhat idealistic interpretation of the Aristotelian categories near the beginning of the same work where the Student asks how substance can be defined and yet incomprehensible. The Teacher's reply is that, just as regarding substance, one can only define it on the basis of things inseparably associated with it, and only define "that it is" (*quia est*) rather than "what it is" (*quid sit*), similarly regarding God, one can only define him on the basis of things created by him, and only define that he is rather than what he is. Given that the only possible definition of God is therefore "*that he is*, the one who is the above-being" (*quia est, qui plus quam esse est*) – the contextual emphasis falling clearly on the *quia est* – it is clear that God is being if not *determinate* being.[86] On this basis, the being that corresponds to the second primordial cause at the beginning of the third book must be understood as determinate being and does not preclude the being-*ness* (*i.e*. the existence or reality) of whatever is prior to it.[87]

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most part, it is the precise nature of the relation of Being and beings to truth or meaning and to time or temporality characteristic of the (ontological) difference that tends to be overlooked by such interpreters. See above p. 567 and nn. 30–32. Much less frequently, one encounters interpreters who have understood the nature of the (ontological) difference correctly but then advance implausible interpretations of Neoplatonic authors in order to find it either fully present or adumbrated. For an example of this tendency see Reiner Schürmann, "Neoplatonic Henology as an Overcoming of Metaphysics," in *Research in Phenomenology* 13 (1983), pp. 25–41. One of the main purposes of the present essay is to put this discussion on track.

84 *Periph.* III. 622A ff. (125 ff.).

85 *Periph.* I. 486D-487B (1903–1926).

86 This argument should be compared with another at *Periph.* II. 587C-589D (1993–2079) where, with explicit reference back to the argument of book I, the "ignorance" of God that is superior to knowledge is said to signify that God does not to know of himself w*hat he is.* Presumably on the basis of the earlier argument – although Eriugena does not draw attention to this point – God knows of himself *that he is*. Cf. also the discussion of the highest human knowledge at *Periph.* IV. 771B-D (1196–1219).

87 On the sense of "real" (which is different from both Being and beings) in Heidegger, see pp 566–567 above.

[580] God is described as non-being especially in two passages of *Periphyseon*. The first passage occurs within the discussion of the so-called primary and fundamental division of all things that can be perceived by the mind or surpass its intentionality into "those that are" (*ea quae sunt*) and "those that are not" (*ea quae non sunt*). Among the five modes of this twofold division, God is placed within the negative category of the first mode because of the "excellence of his nature" (*excellentia suae naturae*).[88] The second passage occurs within the lengthy discussion of creation from nothing where the Teacher concedes to a hypothetical opponent that the "nothing" (*nihilum*) referred to in this context may signify a "universal negation" (*universalis negatio*) of all possession and substance. But this is only to the extent that this negation signifies not "privation of all being" (*privatio totius essentiae*) but "super-essentiality of divine excellence" (*divinae superessentialitatis excellentia*).[89] Now although both passages clearly envision a sense in which non-being signifies surpassing being, we have learned from the previous set of passages that God's status as above (or cause of) being is perfectly compatible with his being-ness.

God is described as above (or cause of) both being and non-being both by the Student at the end of the first statement of the fourfold division of Nature in *Periphyseon I*[90] and by the Teacher at the end of the discussion of creation from nothing in *Periphyseon III*.[91] Both these passages must be understood in the light of the primary and fundamental division of all things that can be perceived by the mind or surpass its intentionality into those that are and those that are not mentioned above. If we assume that it is the affirmative and negative categories of any of the modes from the second to the fifth that are being referred to here, given that the second mode is explicitly considered "in the orders and differentiae of created natures" (*in naturarum creatarum ordinibus atque differentiis*)[92] and the other modes function implicitly in **[581]** the same way, God's status as above (or cause of) both being and non-being is perfectly compatible with his being-ness.

But the question of Nature remains. Given that Nature is the subject of both the fourfold and the fivefold divisions and is in certain sense the most important concept in *Periphyseon* as a whole, the initial ambiguity that seems to present itself as to whether Nature functions in a primarily methodological or primarily metaphysical way is a matter of concern. Fortunately, Eriugena clarifies the situation when speaking of the fourfold division. Here, he identifies the combination of the second and third species of Nature with the combination of the first and fourth species and concludes that the universe comprising God and creature "is reduced again to an indivisible One" (*iterum ad unum individuum . . . revocatur*).[93] In other

88 *Periph.* I. 443A-C (51–83).
89 *Periph.* III, 634A-B (633–637) together with III 686C-687A (2793–2801).
90 *Periph.* I. 442A-B ("and the things that are not" (*et quae non sunt*), Jeauneau, p. 216).
91 *Periph.* III. 686D (2797–2801).
92 *Periph.* I. 443D-444A (84–85).
93 *Periph.* II. 528B (117–119).

words, Nature corresponds to God and is therefore similarly a being rather than Being in Heidegger's sense. However, Eriugena's discussion of Nature includes a further detail that slightly alters the picture. Having concluded his account of the first mode of the primary and fundamental division of all things that can be perceived by the mind or surpass its intentionality, he notes that "that which absolutely is not and cannot be" (*quod penitus non est nec esse potest*) is not included in the fivefold division.[94] The reference to the notion of *impossibility* at this point is striking, although the exclusion of the impossible from the fivefold division entirely is consistent with the inclusion of the fourth species of the fourfold division "among the impossible" (*inter impossibilia*) that was stated in an earlier paragraph, given that the latter clearly referred to the notion of *something* impossible – that God should not create – and not to impossibility *as such*.[95] Nevertheless, it is obviously of great interest that Eriugena finally refers – in the case of total impossibility – to something that has *absolutely no* **[582]** *being-ness* even though he never pursues this line of inquiry in *Periphyseon* or elsewhere.

Before turning from Eriugena's understanding of Being to his understanding of Language and Temporality, a short digression is necessary in order to consider an aspect of Heidegger's thinking that seems to many readers to bring him more closely into line with the approach of Eriugena that we have already sketched and indeed with that of the medieval "mystical" tradition in general.

Some of the most important developments in Heidegger's thought after *Being and Time* are initiated in the essay *What is Metaphysics?* Here, the assumption that the sciences begin from our relation or attitude to beings themselves *and nothing more* leads to a provocative question regarding the meaning of this "nothing."[96] The definition of the latter as the negation of the totality of beings brings up the insuperable problem of grasping the totality of beings in the first place.[97] For this reason, Heidegger abandons the approach to the nothing through the logical sense of negation in favor of an approach to the logical sense of negation through the nothing and replaces the attempt to fashion a concept of nothing through a formal reasoning process to an attempt to *disclose* the nothing through the attunement of "anxiety" (*Angst*).[98] Now the relation between concealment and disclosure introduced here had been a structural element in Heidegger's phenomenological

94 *Periph.* I. 443C (77–83).

95 *Periph.* I. 442A (24–25). Eriugena's view is that impossible *things* are sustained by a kind of oppositional relation with possible things, this oppositional relation being called "a strange natural power" (*mirabilis quaedam naturalis virtus*) at *Periph.* I. 443D (81–83). Therefore, impossible *things* – but not impossibility itself – have a kind of being.

96 "What Is Metaphysics?," trans. D. F. Krell, in *Pathmarks* 84 (G 105–106).

97 *WM* 85 (G 107–108).

98 *WM* 85–89 (G 107–112). The doctrine is slightly modified in Heidegger's postscript (1943) to this essay. Modern scholars have seen the modification – in which he anticipates his later emphasis on "releasement" – as bringing Heidegger closer to the Eckhartian position. See Caputo [n. 19] 27–29, Sikka [n. 19] 147.

method from his early days[99] and is most well known through the etymological explanation of *a-lētheia* ("Truth") as *a-* = "un-" + *lanthanein* = "be concealed from" that occurs in the essay *The Essence of Truth* and elsewhere.[100] An important elaboration of this idea can be found **[583]** in Heidegger's discussions of the Truth of Being in *Contributions to Philosophy* where we learn on the one hand, what the Truth of Being is not and on the other, what the Truth of Being is.[101] The "Truth of Being" (*Die Wahrheit des Seyns*) is not the truth "about" Being in the sense of the conclusion of correct propositions about the concept of Being, and is also not "true" Being in the sense that some concept of actuality is presupposed as a measure.[102] The Truth of Being is a dynamic relation – enacted in and through *Dasein*[103] – between the disclosure that Heidegger calls "clearing" (*Lichtung, lichten*) and the self-concealing in disclosure that he calls "sheltering" (*Bergung, bergen*),[104] the relation between clearing and sheltering as such being described as the grounding of the Between in beings and the various modalities of sheltering as the beings themselves.[105]

In following discussions of this kind, it is important to remember that Being is less something to which one can apply the logical operations of negation and affirmation than the basis of the relation between negation and affirmation itself – albeit allowing for the inadequacy of formal reasoning at this point – , and less something one can think in terms of concealment or disclosure than a thinking of the relation between concealment and disclosure as such.[106] This is the sense in which one must understand his statement in the preface to *Being and Time* that one cannot say that the being of beings is something of such a kind that "behind it" stands something that "does not appear,"[107] and his reference in *Contributions to Philosophy* to "Not-Being as a way of Being: Being and yet Not" (*Nichtsein als eine Art des Seins: Seiend und* **[584]** *doch nicht*) and again to "Being having the character of Nothing and yet precisely Being" (*Sein: nichthaft und doch gerade Seiend*).[108]

In Eriugena's *Periphyseon* on the other hand, the logical aspects of negation and affirmation – understood primarily in terms of the two "principal parts of theology" (*principales theologiae partes*) called the "apophatic" (*apophatikē, abnegativa*)

99 See p. 566 above.

100 Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth: On Plato's Parable of the Cave and the Theaetetus*, trans. T. Sadler (London-New York: Continuum, 2002) (*Vom Wesen der Wahrheit. Zu Platons Höhlengleichnis und Theätet, GA* 34, Frankfurt: Klostermann 1988), § 2, 5–7, § 16, 85–86.

101 The "truth" of Being is another manifestation of the "meaning" of Being. See n. 25.

102 *CP* § 44, 64 (G 92–93).

103 *CP* § 32, 49 (G 71).

104 See *CP* §§ 9, 21 (G 29); 10, 22 (G 30–31).

105 *CP* § 9, 21 (G 29). On the sense of these formulations, see below.

106 See *LH* 256–257 (G 333) where Heidegger argues that Being is the clearing itself. We cannot pursue further here the various degrees of disclosure and concealment that Heidegger evokes with the terminology of "hinting" (*Winkung*) and "withdrawal" (*Entzug*). For example, see the extended discussion in *CP* § 5, 15 (G 20).

107 *BT*, intro. II, § 7, 60 [G 35–36].

108 *CP* § 47, 70 (G 101).

and the "kataphatic" (*kataphatikē, affirmativa*), respectively – obviously play a more decisive role.[109] Although the association of negation with "Nothing" (*nihil*) is perhaps as prominent in Eriugena as it is in Heidegger,[110] it is the logical sense of negation and the correlation of negation with affirmation[111] that govern the association of negation with Nothing rather than the other way round.[112]

Eriugena introduces the two branches of theology in the logical context of considering the application of the ten Aristotelian categories to God. Here, he begins by arguing that, since the divine names and the things that they denote have opposites whereas God has no opposite, one should speak of the latter not as being, good, and so forth but as "above-being" (*huperousios, superessentialis*), "above-good" (*huperagathos, plus quam bonus*), and the like.[113] This approach does not conflict with the earlier assumption of God's ineffability thanks to the peculiar semantic qualities of the terms **[585]** compounded with the prefix *super-* ("above-").[114] In the first place, logical affirmation and negation are not "opposed" (*opponi*) to one another in this context. Affirmation "does not properly" (*non . . . proprie*) affirm that a term applies to God but "dresses up" (*vestit/induit*) the Divinity with this attribute, whereas negation denies that a term applies "properly" (*proprie*) to God and "divests" (*exuere/spoliare*) the Divinity of that attribute. Therefore, affirmation and negation "agree" (*consentiunt*) with one another.[115] In addition to this, the special terms compounded with the prefix *super-* have a primarily negative sense in this context. Speaking of God as "above-being" or as "above-good" amounts to employing the form of the affirmative "in the expression"(*in pronuntiatione*) but the force of the negative "in the understanding" (*in intellectu*).[116] Therefore, the assumption that affirmation and negation are not opposed to one another and in fact agree with one another is reinforced by the argument that negation indicates superiority.

109 The main discussion of this idea, derived from Dionysius the Areopagite, begins at *Periph.* I. 458A (674).

110 For example, see *Periph.* III. 634A-C (626–649) and III. 686C-687B (2802–2817).

111 Eriugena's "logic" is of course not the logic of Aristotle, since it incorporates a non-discursive tendency. Indeed, it is true that there is a pronounced non-discursive tendency in Neoplatonic doctrines in general – especially in the sphere of intellection – and that in this respect the Neoplatonists and Heidegger are moving in a somewhat similar direction. However, since this non-discursive tendency is less pronounced in Eriugena than it is in Plotinus or even Dionysius, we will not pursue the possibility of establishing parallels between Heidegger and Eriugena at this point. On non-discursivity in Heidegger and Neoplatonism see Stephen Gersh, *Neoplatonism after Derrida, Parallelograms* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), pp. 167–183.

112 In addition, the Heidegger's nothing represents finitude whereas Eriugena's is essentially infinite. On God's infinity in Eriugena see *Periph.* II. 525A, Jeauneau, pp. 134–135); III. 620B (45–60), etc. On the comparison of Heidegger and Neoplatonism on this point, see Sikka [n. 19] 150–151.

113 *Periph*. I. 459B-460B (773–776).

114 *Periph*. I. 460C-461A (785–799).

115 At *Periph*. I. 461B-462A (823–853), Eriugena adds that affirmative terms are applied "through transference/metaphor" (*per metaphoram*) from the creature to the Creator.

116 *Periph*. I. 462A-D (854–884).

The relation between the negative and the affirmative is admittedly, for Eriugena as much as for Heidegger, associated somehow with the relation between the concealed and the unconcealed.[117] This is not only implicit in the references to dressing up and divesting in the passages quote above but also explicit in Eriugena's metaphysical interpretations of the book of *Genesis*. In the latter, the phrase "and darkness was over the face of the abyss" corresponds to the *non-/above-*comprehensibility of the primordial causes,[118] and the phrase "let there be light" to the emanation of the *non-/above-* comprehensibility of the primordial causes into the comprehensibility of their effects.[119] However, the relation between the negative (concealed) and the affirmative (unconcealed) **[586]** in Eriugena differs from that in Heidegger for at least two reasons. First, the opposition of negation and affirmation is further associated with the relation between metaphysical transcendence and immanence. A clear illustration of this mode of thinking can be found in the passage where the emanation of the divine Goodness that is called "Nothing" into the multiplicity of created things is described as a descent from "the negation of all beings" (*negatio omnium essentiarum*) into "the affirmation of the whole universe's being" (*affirmatio totius universitatis essentiae*).[120] Second, Being is itself something thought in terms of concealment and disclosure rather than the relation between concealment and disclosure as such. This is indicated by Eriugena's establishment of a relation between negation and affirmation or transcendence and immanence with respect to each of the divine names or primordial causes, Being usually following Goodness and preceding Life and Intellect or more rarely coming first in the sequence of such principles.[121]

Now if Eriugena's account of the relation between God and Nature differs radically from Heidegger's account of the relation between Being and beings in that the former's categories of God and Nature together comprise the latter's category of beings but take no account of the latter's category of Being – despite his method of negative and affirmative theology and the exalted role of the "Nothing" – , one can also say that Eriugena's philosophy necessarily inverts Heidegger's thinking concerning the relative priorities of Language over Being and of Time over the reduction of temporality that Eriugena calls "eternity" and Heidegger "the present." These two inversions are obviously consistent with the medieval writer's avoidance of the problem of the so-called *meaning* of Being.

117 Or alternatively: between the undisclosed and the disclosed. See above p. 566.

118 *Periph*. II. 550B-551A (755–784).

119 *Periph*. III. 692B-693B (3034–3082). The interpretation continues in a similar way with the phrases: "And light was made" and "And God divided the light from the darkness," etc.

120 *Periph*. III. 681B-C (2566–2575). With this argument one should compare *Periph*. III. 621B-C (94–104) where the Creator is described negatively as neither genus nor species and neither whole nor part with respect to the created and affirmatively as both genus and species and both whole and part.

121 See *Periph*. III. 622B ff. (133 ff.) for the first and *Periph.* I. 458C (699–706) for the second usage. However, the latter may reflect the somewhat faulty understanding of the student.

[587] The *Periphyseon* does not contain any extended treatment of the nature of Language itself – an omission in itself highly indicative – and such discussions as do occur remain within the perspective of conventional patristic Platonism. It is therefore only necessary to comment on two issues. The first issue concerns what one might term the predominance of the intellectual over the semantic aspects of language in Eriugena's view of the latter. Thus, at several points in *Periphyseon* a kind of structural parallelism is established between the externalization in creation of the divine wisdom and the primordial causes that it contains and the externalization in language of the human intellect and the intellectual notions that it contains, the emphasis falling in one passage on the fact that both the divine wisdom and the human intellect always retain within whatever is expressed externally[122] and in another passage on the fact that the divine wisdom creates the material component necessary for the external expression from nothing whereas the human intellect creates it from something.[123] The second issue is concerned with what might be termed the predominance of the natural over the conventional aspects in Eriugena's view of language. Many passages in *Periphyseon* make important philosophical points on the basis of presumed etymologies after the manner of Isidore of Seville: for instance, the divine name "God" (*deus/theos*) is held to signify either – via derivation from the Greek *theōrō* ("I see") – that the first cause sees within himself everything that is, or – via derivation from the Greek *theō* ("I run") – that the first cause is actively present within all things[124] and again, the divine name "Good" (*bonitas*) is held to signify – via derivation from the Greek *boō* ("I cry out") – that the first cause cries out with an intelligible cry that all things should come from nothing into being,[125] the words invariably being assumed to retain some primeval association with realities. The really important point in all this is that both the predominance of the intellectual over the semantic and that of the natural over the conventional **[588]** aspects of language indicate a situation in which being is prior to language and determines the latter. In other words, the position with respect to Language and Being that we have seen to be Heidegger's is inverted.[126]

The treatment of Time in the *Periphyseon* also assumes the metaphysical framework provided by the treatise's patristic models although, since there are conflicts of authority that have to be resolved, the writer is forced to make certain innovations both with respect to the nature of time and to its relation to eternity. As a consequence of the latter, there seems at first sight to be a tendency on Eriugena's part to move away from the typical later Greek and modern position as understood by Heidegger

122 *Periph.* II. 551C-552A (800–820).

123 *Periph.* III. 634A (626–633).

124 *Periph.* I. 452 B-C (436–444).

125 *Periph.* II. 580C-D (1733–1747). Here, the same argument is also made on the basis of a connection between the Greek words *kalos* ("good") – in Eriugena's translation – and *kalō* ("I call").

126 The opposition between the Heideggerian and Neoplatonic positions with respect to language that is observed in Eriugena is more or less the same as that observed in Eckhart. See Caputo [n. 19], pp. 166–173.

in which there is an exclusively static preoccupation with the temporal dimension of the present and a forgetting of the distinction between presenc*ing* and the present. However, a close analysis of the relevant passages and a careful combination of those passages shows that, in the end, the treatment of time and its relation to eternity in the *Periphyseon* moves within the framework of traditional Western metaphysics by treating eternity not only as the real but also as *a* being as defined by Heidegger.[127]

Eriugena briefly takes up the question of time when discussing the Aristotelian categories in *Periphyseon I* where he states that everything except God is in space and time,[128] and at greater length when discussing creation in book III where he argues that God "lacks all space and surpasses all times in his eternity" (*omni spatio caret et omnia tempora sua aeternitate superat*).[129] That God subsists beyond time does not render him completely static in nature, since he is involved in the production of the primordial causes. However, there is between God's begetting of his Word and his production – in the Word – of these causes no "temporal motion or temporal process" (*aut temporalis motus aut* **[589]** *temporalis processio*).[130] Further aspects of Eriugena's treatment of time emerge in his discussion of the primordial causes in *Periphyseon III* where he argues not only that these causes are both "eternal" (*aeterna*) as subsisting in the Word of God but "made" (*facta*) as proceeding into generation "in the order of times" (*in ordine temporum*), but that the same can be said of their effects.[131]

Although it clearly emerges from these discussions of cosmology that eternity precedes time and corresponds to an absence of time or "*a*-temporality," there are some passages dealing with human history in which it is an eternity corresponding to a sublimation of time or "*omni*-temporality" that precedes time. In each of these cases, it is Eriugena's spiritual interpretation of the book of *Genesis* according to which the paradise described there is in the future rather than the past that has led to a rethinking of the usual conceptualization of God's and man's relation to time. It is connection with the spiritual interpretation of *Genesis* that Eriugena perhaps also comes closest to formulating something corresponding to Heidegger's notion of a self-grounding *Dasein*.

Near the beginning of *Periphyseon*, Eriugena associates *God's relation* to the unfolding of the primordial causes with the establishment of all human individuals in the single human nature. The medieval writer argues here that the Creator brings that human nature that he considers "all at once" (*simul*) into visible being "in a certain sequence that he knows" (*quadam ut ipse novit serie*).[132] Those who

127 The contrast between the positions of Heidegger and medieval Platonism with respect to the "metaphysics of presence" drawn by Sikka [n. 19], pp. 72–76, 94–95, 179–180 is broadly correct.

128 *Periph.* I. 481B-C (1667–1672).

129 *Periph.* III. 643C (1021–1026).

130 *Periph.* II. 556C-557A (981–990). Cf. II. 552D-553C (846–874), II. 562A (1129–1132).

131 *Periph.* III. 670A-D (1086–1120).

132 For the relation between this Eriugena's treatment of human nature and Heidegger's view of *Dasein* see n. 77. For a good analysis of the contrast between *Dasein*'s transcendence and temporality

"already are appearing or have appeared (*iam . . . apparent et apparuerunt*) in the world are said to be whereas those who "are still hidden but will be" (*adhuc latent futuri tamen*) are said not to be.[133] Although the passage is interesting because of its suggestion that God somehow embraces past, present, and future **[590]** in his eternity and not simply the present, one must also take account of other passages in *Periphyseon* that qualify this statement. In connection with the discussion of paradise, having asked why God should create in man before he sinned certain characteristics that were made because of sin, Eriugena replies that there is for God nothing past nor future nor the middle between past to future since "to him all things *are* at once" (*ipsi omnia simul sunt*).[134] In other words, the temporal past and future become the temporal present in God.

On the reverse side of the same question, Eriugena illustrates *man*'s *relation* to the unfolding of the primordial causes with the infusion of the notions of all things into the single human nature but argues that the knowledge so infused remains concealed from that nature "until the latter is restored to its original completeness" (*donec ad pristinam integritatem restituatur*). The beauty and greatness of the image established in human nature through the infusion of such universal knowledge is strictly something that human nature "*will* understand" (*intellectura est*).[135] The passage is important because of its suggestion that human knowledge in the fullest is inherently futural and not simply present – a point which would bring Eriugena's notion of human nature into the closest proximity with Heidegger's presentation of *Dasein* – , although once again other passages in *Periphyseon* that qualify this statement must be taken into account. Near the end of his work, Eriugena uses the scene on the mountain in which Elijah and Moses are seen speaking with Jesus "in whom they were" (*in quo . . . erant*), "to whom they will return" (*in quem . . . reversuri sunt*) and "with whom they are one" (*cum quo unum sunt*) to show the simultaneity of the saints' three modes of contemplating God.[136] In other words, here also the temporal future – as well as the past – becomes the temporal present.

[591] In conclusion, then, we must say that Eriugena remains securely within the boundaries of the Platonic, Neoplatonic, and medieval Platonic world-view. In the passages considered at the beginning of this section, we saw him maintaining in the context of a discussion of the divine names or primordial causes that, although God can be described in a certain manner as above (or cause of) being, as non-being, and as above (or cause of) being and non-being, he is nonetheless not excluded from being-ness: that is to say, he exists or is real. In the last group of passages considered

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in Heidegger and the soul's reversion to atemporality in Neoplatonism see Sikka [n. 19], pp. 43, 69, 98–105, 152–156, 173.

133 *Periph.* I. 445A (118–125).

134 *Periph.* IV. 808A (1808–1812) – the authority here is Gregory of Nyssa. For another denial of past and future to God, see *Periph.* III. 640B-D (881–905) where the authority is Augustine.

135 *Periph.* IV. 768D-769C (1093–1117).

136 *Periph.* V. 999C-1000A (6312–6332). Cf. V. 895A (1588–1594) and 912B (2361–2366).

in this section, we have seen him holding that eternity precedes time metaphysically, that eternity consists of the *a*-temporality of God's production of the primordial causes or the *omni*-temporality of God's establishment of human nature among those primordial causes, and that eternity is understood by analogy with "presence." Therefore, if God is identical with his Eternity, he is not only existent and real but also *a being* in Heidegger's sense, and even if some *difference* is admitted between God and creation, that difference is not *die ontologische Differenz*.

Heidegger/Eriugena

In the first two sections of this essay we placed in juxtaposition Heidegger's and Eriugena's treatments of Being,[137] *Dasein*, Language, and Time, and have discovered that the two thinkers are situated in diametrical opposition to one another on most essential points.[138] However, it may be possible that Heidegger would be **[592]** willing to apply the special term of "turning" (*Kehre*) – a kind of dynamic relation of simultaneous opposition and identity – to the hermeneutic relation that has emerged between himself and his predecessor.[139] But even if Heidegger and Eriugena are situated in diametrical opposition to one another on most essential points, do they not also move into a relation of congruence with respect to their preoccupation with fourfold structure?[140] A fourfold structure consisting of earth, world, men, and gods makes a persistent appearance in Heidegger's commentaries on Hölderlin, the treatises *Contributions to Philosophy* and *Mindfulness*, and the essays on Language.[141] A fourfold structure consisting of creating and not created,

137 Together with the difference between Being and beings.

138 It goes without saying that the present writer is not sympathetic to the line of interpretation that suggests that Heidegger is much less opposed to Platonism and is in actual fact a kind of crypto-Platonist. See for example John D. Caputo, *Demythologizing Heidegger,* Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press 1993 (especially on pp. 123, 125, 139, 164, and 222, n. 1). The treatment of Heidegger's notion of *Wesen* which he translates habitually as "essential Being" rather than as "essential sway of Being" (or even as "sway of Being") provides a good illustration of Caputo's approach, since it allows Heidegger's position to be turned towards Platonism (via a perceived emphasis upon essentiality and the static sense of *Wesen*) rather than against it (via Heidegger's real emphasis upon folding-duality and the dynamic sense of *Wesen*). See further n. 145. For a better approach see Jacques Derrida, "Sauf le nom (Post-Scriptum)," in *On the Name*, ed. T. Dutoit and trans. J. P. Leavey, Jr. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), pp. 64–68 and 80 where the distinction between the Neoplatonic henological approach and the Heideggerian ontological difference is definitely assumed together with the possibility of *performatively enacting* the relation of simultaneous identity and difference between these two positions.

139 This topic again is central to *Contributions to Philosophy*. For the turning of Being see *CP* § 48, 71 (G 102–103); for the turning relation between Being and *Dasein CP* § 2, 6 (G 7); for the turning of *Dasein CP* § 11, 23 (G 31); for the turning of Language *CP* § 41, 58 (G 83–84). At *CP* § 44, 66 (G 95) Heidegger suggests that the tautological expressions that are common in his works – such as "The Truth of Being is the Being of Truth" – are fleeting signs of this turning.

140 Of course, this is not to suggest that Heidegger himself would have taken this path. As Jean-Marc Narbonne has shown [n. 11], he was not a good historian of Neoplatonism.

141 Earth, heaven, men, and gods do not represent the only fourfold structure in Heidegger. For instance, at *IM* 202 (G 154) there is a fourfold structure consisting of the "becoming" (*Werden*),

created and creating, created and not creating, and not creating and not created Nature governs the structure of Eriugena's *Periphyseon*.[142] When Heidegger cited Eriugena as a paradigm of systematization in *Schelling's Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom*, was this structure unfolded on the first page of Eriugena's work the feature that had caught his attention?[143]

[593] We will conclude here by considering the structural components of Heidegger's "Fourfold" (*Vierfalt*) from the ground up, these components being what we will term a "vibration" and an "interstice."

The notion of a specific kind of dynamic tension underlies much of Heidegger's thinking concerning Being, *Dasein*, Time, and Language and especially concerning the relations between these, its presence being indicated by a variety of terms such as "vibration" (*Schwebung*) and its synonyms and evoked as the tolling of a bell in the poetry of Georg Trakl. This dynamic tension is associated particularly with the notion of *Wesen*: a German term that in Heidegger combines the senses of *a*. the "essential" (having a connotation of universality), *b*. a manner of being (being possibly indeterminate), and *c*. the "ownmost" (having a connotation of individual enactment) with *d*. that certain kind of vibration to which we are referring. When *Wesen* is being used in sense *d*. (which has been rendered in English as "essential sway/swaying") Heidegger often substitutes the term *Wesung*.[144]

Heidegger is particularly concerned with the dual character of the vibration, as indicated by his discussions of mediated Identity and of Being as Difference in the late publication entitled *Identity and Difference*.[145] In the first chapter of this

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"appearance" (*Schein*), "thought" (*Denken*), and "the ought" (*Sollen*) that have a disclosing relation to Being. Thus, the fourfold structure is a kind of guide for thinking rather than a rigid "system."

142 We have referred to this schema in passing on p. 577 (primordial causes as second species) and 580–582 (the four species of Nature).

143 It is perhaps possible to align the fourfold of Eriugena's *Periphyseon* with the Heideggerian "fourfold" exploited in the present essay. Thus, God as beginning (first species) might correspond to Being, the primordial causes (second species) to Language, the effects of the primordial causes (third species) to Time, and God as end (fourth species) to *Dasein.* We have not pursued this analysis here, because it requires at best a very selective reading of the textual data.

144 For a discussion of this terminology and the English rendition, see the "translators' foreword" in Martin Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy*, trans. P. Emad and K. Maly, pp. xxiv–xxvii. Obviously for Heidegger, the flux in the meanings of the signifier *Wesen* is a performative enactment of the flux that it signifies.

145 Heidegger does not explicitly introduce the term "duality" at this point, preferring to speak in *Contributions to Philosophy* of something that he calls the "onefold" (*Einheit, Einfach, Einfachheit*) . See *CP* §§ 5, 11 (G 14); 5, 14 (G 18); 6, 16 (G 21) – in reality, Heidegger is trying to express the notion of something simultaneously unitary and dual, but we will call this "duality" in order to underline the radical departure from traditional monistic metaphysics. However, the dynamic character of this "onefold" is shown clearly by the references to it as "essentially swaying" (*wesentlich*) at *CP* § 39, 57 (G 81–82) and as identifiable with "crossing" (*Übergang*) at *CP* § 5, 15 (G 20). Moreover, the felicitously chosen term "onefold" (*Einfalt*) can actually be found in the essay "The Thing," in Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. A. Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), p. 179 (*Vorträge und Aufsätze*, 4 Aufl., Pfullingen: Neske 1978, 172). Two important aspects of the onefold should be noted but cannot be pursued here: namely, *1*. the relation between the onefold and "attunement" (*Stimmung*). See *CP* § 5, 11 (G 14) where he says

work entitled "The **[594]** Principle of Identity," the writer attempts to think the principle that can be expressed by the formula "A = A" by exploring the distinction between the non-mediated identity that is characteristic of scientific and logical reasoning and the mediated identity that occurs in more authentic thinking,[146] the mediated identity being divided into the thinking of Being as dependent on Identity that is intimated in a fragment of Parmenides[147] and the thinking of Identity as dependent on Being that was established by Hegel's speculative idealism.[148] Heidegger here describes the mediated identity as the "swaying of Identity" (*Wesen der Identität*).[149] In the second chapter of the same work entitled "The Onto-Theo-Logical Constitution of Metaphysics," the writer advocates a stepping back from the thinking where Difference is thought as subsequent to Being or beings – typical of Western metaphysics – to a thinking where Difference is thought as prior to Being or beings.[150] In the latter case, the Being thought as Difference means Being which is beings in such a manner that the copula "is" has the sense of "transition into," although it is less accurate to say that Being crosses over to beings than that beings are the crossing-over as such. Heidegger here characterizes Being as Difference by saying that "Being holds sway" (*Sein west*).[151] Now if these accounts of mediated Identity and Being as Difference are not in themselves **[595]** thought sufficient to indicate the dual nature of the essential sway,[152] one only has to note that Heidegger definitely views that which pervades the history of beings in dependence on the essential sway as dual whereas Platonic metaphysics invariably sees that which accrues to the worlds of being and becoming by derivation from the First Principle as unitary. Heidegger's position is well illustrated in the essay "The Origin of the Work of Art" which speaks about a certain *Riss* ("rift") between the disclosed and the self-concealing in disclosure where beings pursue the multiplicity and variety of their historical paths.[153]

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that there is no word for the onefold of such attunements as startled dismay, reservedness, and deep awe; *2.* the relation between the onefold and "jointure" (*Fuge*). See *CP* § 39, 57 (G 81–82) where he says that the joinings of jointure stand alone, but only in order to make the onefold more pressing. Regarding jointure, see above n. 75.

146 Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, trans. J. Stambaugh (New York: Harper and Row 1969), pp. 24–25 (*Identität und Differenz*, Pfullingen: Neske 1957, *86–88). Stambaugh reproduces the German text in this bilingual edition (cited here as pp*).

147 *ID* 27 (G *89–90).

148 *ID* 25 (G *87–88).

149 *ID* 25 (G *88).

150 *ID* 49–52 (G *115–118) and *ID* 56 (G *122–123).

151 *ID* 64 (G *132).

152 In addition, the purpose of Heidegger's second essay is to show that the difference between the two senses of Being in the tradition that he calls "onto-theo-logy" – being as most general and being as the highest – is one historical manifestation of the forgetting of this essential sway. See *ID* 61, 68–72 (G *128–129, *136–141).

153 Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," pp. 38–39 (G 51–52).

In Heidegger's writings, it is normally the relatively dynamic aspect of the duality of vibration that is emphasized, this being indicated by the contrast that is established from time to time with a relatively static aspect of the same vibrating duality. The latter is described using some terminology suggesting the idea of an interstice or mediation,[154] which might perhaps be imagined as dividing each wave between the crest and the trough.[155] Whereas the vibration was more closely associated with Being in Heidegger's thinking, the interstice is more closely associated with *Dasein*.[156]

In *Contributions to Philosophy*, this interstice is indicated most often by the term "the Between" (*das Zwischen*) when it seems that a *quasi*-static moment within a single vibration is mainly to **[596]** be understood. At one point, Heidegger characterizes *Dasein* as "that 'between' which first grounds itself and sets humans and god apart and together, owning each one to the other" (*jenes Zwischen, das, sich selbst erst gründend, den Menschen und den Gott auseinander- und zueinander-setzt und einander eignet*).[157] Elsewhere, he explains that the "between" of *Dasein* overcomes the *chōrismos* not by building a bridge, so to speak, between Being and beings but by simultaneously transforming Being and beings in their simultaneity.[158] In the *Elucidations of Hölderlin's Poetry*, we hear about an interstice in the vibration of meaning or time where our *Dasein* is defined in terms of a moment in which the dimensions of time open up and where we form "one being-colloquy and one being-historical" (*ein Gesprächsein und ein Geschichtlichsein*) and in which it can first be said that time *is*.[159] The role of time in this discussion is further clarified in the lecture *On Time and Being*. Heidegger speaks here of the "Nearness" (*Nahheit*) that brings together and holds apart the three dimensions of present, past, and future time for the staying of man, this interstitial Nearness being subsequently identified as the fourth dimension sustaining the interplay of the other three: namely, space.[160] In *Contributions to Philosophy*, Heidegger notes that the "between" into which distress drives man is not a "transcendence" (*Transzendenz*) with respect to man but rather the opposite: an openness to which

154 As we shall see below, this is ambivalently spatial and temporal in character.

155 If the "ecstasis" of *Being and Time* corresponds to the vibration, then the "ecstatic horizon" of the same work corresponds to the interstice.

156 These generalizations should be qualified by noting, on the one hand, such passages as *CP* § 9, 21 (G 29) where Truth holds sway as Ground and *CP* § 34, 53 (G 76–77) where Being holds sway as Ground and on the other hand, such passages as *CP* § 5, 10 (G 15) where Truth is the "between" for the essential swaying of Being and for the beingness of beings, *CP* § 7, 19 (G 26) where Being is the "between" for the passing of the last god and for *Dasein,* and *CP* § 7, 20 (G 27) where *Ereignis* is the "between" for the passing of god and the history of man. Obviously, Heidegger is continually exploiting the device that was called the "hermeneutic circle" in *Being and Time*.

157 *CP* § 8, 21 (G 28–29).

158 *CP* § 5, 11 (G 14). Heidegger is here attacking the metaphysical position typical of Platonism.

159 *EHP* 57 (G 39–40). Heidegger also calls this the "moment of vision" (*das Augenblick*). As it appears in *Being and Time,* the moment of vision is an ecstasis of the present within understanding which is itself an ecstasis of the future. See *BT* § 65, 376 (G 328).

160 Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, trans. J. Stambaugh (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), p. 15 (*Zur Sache des Denkens*, Tübingen: Niemeyer, 3. Aufl. 1988, 16).

man belongs as founder and preserver.[161] In the same work, the interstice is most often signified by the term "Mid-point" (*Mitte*) when it seems that a *quasi*-static moment within two or more vibrations is mainly to be understood. In this way, Heidegger speaks of the distress that, by bringing him first of all in front of beings in the **[597]** whole and into the mid-point of beings, brings man to himself.[162] Finally, he defines *Ereignis* as the "self-supplying and self-mediating mid-point into which all essential swaying of the truth of Being must be thought back in advance" (*die sich selbst ermittelnde und vermittelnde Mitte, in die alle Wesung der Wahrheit des Seyns im voraus zurückgedacht werden muss*).[163]

We will not attempt to pursue Heidegger's notion of *Ereignis* any further, especially since the latter is not something that can be understood – that is to say, discursively in the present – but something that is *enacted*. Moreover, the "jointure" of Being, *Dasein*, Language, and Time and of Heidegger and Eriugena that has been enacted in this essay is – at least when seen from the viewpoint of Heidegger's own *Contributions to Philosophy* – already "from Enowning" (*Vom Ereignis*).[164] Instead, we will return to the beginning of our discussion of the vibration and interstice in order to establish on a more secure foundation one final important point that was simply assumed there.

One of the most notable features of Heidegger's thought is the emphasis placed upon questioning and on the formal enumeration of the types of question. In *Introduction to Metaphysics*, Heidegger discusses at length an important question: "Why are there beings rather than nothing?" This is further characterized as the broadest question – because it considers everything that is not nothing – , the deepest question – because it does not look for a ground on the same level – , and the most fundamental question – because it emphasizes the role of the questioner.[165] Moreover, a shorter version of the question: "Why are there beings?" – which assumes the possibility of a higher mode of being as ground – is distinguished from a longer version: "Why are there beings rather than nothing?" – which forecloses the possibility of this higher mode of being as ground.[166] In *Contributions to Philosophy*, Heidegger calls the question: "Why are there beings rather than nothing?" the question of "crossing" (*Űbergang*) because it leads from the **[598]** question: "What are beings as such?" that has dominated Western philosophy until Nietzsche and is elsewhere called the "guiding question" (*Leitfrage*) by Heidegger – , to the question: "What is the meaning of Being?" that was introduced by Heidegger himself and is elsewhere called the "fundamental question" (*Grundfrage*).[167]

161 *CP* § 7, 19 (G 26). Heidegger is again attacking the metaphysical position typical of Platonism.
162 *CP* § 17, 32 (G 45).
163 *CP* § 34, 51 (G 73).
164 On "jointure" see n.75.
165 *IM* 1–3 (G 1–3).
166 *IM* 27–29 (G 21–23).
167 *CP* § 280, 358 (G 509).

The nature of questioning in Heidegger's writing is another topic that it is not necessary to explore in order to complete the task of the present essay.[168] We will merely draw attention to his introduction of a family of terms associated through their shared connotations of vibration, oscillation, swaying, and suspension into this discussion of questioning, for example – in the case of the longer version of the question of crossing that is discussed in *Introduction to Metaphysics* – when the questioning is said to begin to oscillate" (*kommen ins Schwanken*) and our questioning *Dasein* is said to "come into suspension" (*kommen in die Schwebe*) between the extreme possibilities of beings or Nothing.[169] In the last analysis, it is therefore questioning that primarily underlies the single vibration, the between or middle, and the plurality of vibrations that we have been discussing.

Now, since there is nothing in Eriugena remotely comparable with these features, the fourfold of the *Periphyseon* must represent – when thought in terms of its foundational assumptions – a *philosopheme* radically different from its Heideggerian "analogue."[170] Therefore, the seeming congruence between the two **[599]** thinkers that initially seemed to promise a mitigation of the radical opposition disclosed by our investigation of Being, *Dasein*, Language, and Time turns out to harbor yet another opposition. For someone wishing to establish the roots of Heidegger's essential thinking in the Neoplatonic tradition – perhaps with the intention of "de-mythologizing" this thinking – these results will be unwelcome and perhaps even implausible. However, for someone who desires to reinvigorate the content of Neoplatonic thought in terms of Heidegger's radical innovations our conclusions will be more immediately compelling and, perhaps, also fruitful with respect to future developments.[171]

168 We will also not explore the close relation that Heidegger establishes, particularly in his *Contributions to Philosophy*, between questioning and "decision" (*Entscheidung*). At *CP* § 1, 4–5 (G 5) he speaks of thinking in the crossing as the site of thinking-questioning's decisions, at *CP* § 14, 29 (G 41) of questioning and decidedness to question-worthiness, and at *CP* § 16, 31 (G 44) of the question of belongingness as a question of deciding about belongingness and its opposite. Heidegger stresses that the deciding of which he speaks is not primarily a matter of moral choice – see *CP* § 43, 60–61 (G 87–88) on the misunderstanding of *Being and Time* in this sense – and is not between pre-given alternatives at all. See *CP* 46, 69 (G 100).

169 *IM* 28 (G 22).

170 Without going into too much detail here, one should mention the facts that *1*. the dynamic aspect of the fourfold in Eriugena's system is overflow rather than vibration and unity-multiplicity rather than duality. For instance, see *Periph.* II. 552A-C (815–841) and III. 632B-D (561–576) on God as flowing forth into creation, and *Periph.* II. 526C-D (69–73) on God as flowing forth into genera, species, and individuals; *2.* the static aspect of the fourfold is represented by the mediating participation between participated and participant. See *Periph.* III. 630A-631A (475–520). Finally, one should note that in *Periphyseon,* questioning (predominantly on the side of the Student) is strictly subordinated to answering (predominantly on the side of the Teacher).

171 The author would like to conclude by thanking Dermot Moran and Adriaan Peperzak for comments after the oral presentation of this paper in Chicago that have enabled the written version to be improved.

10

NICHOLAS OF CUSA AND THE HISTORICAL PLATO

[117] Although Nicholas of Cusa[1] cites the views of *Platonici* at many points in his writings and in such a manner as to emphasize the distinction between their opinions and his own, the cardinal was also justified in declaring himself to be a Platonist in a striking marginal note in one of his MSS of Proclus.[2] He had no option but to admit this, given that he held the supreme doctrinal authority after Christ and his apostles to be Dionysius the Areopagite, and this "greatest of theologians" (*theologorum maximus*)[3] was also correctly understood by him to have been one of Plato's followers. Nevertheless, Nicholas of Cusa's Platonism was of a type determined by the personal conditions of his philosophical education in the early fifteenth century,[4] and certain non-Platonic tendencies in late medieval nominalism and mathematical science had also come to the forefront of his thought.[5]

[118] In order to understand the relation between Nicholas of Cusa's philosophy and what we might term – for expository convenience at least – the "historical" Plato,[6] a preliminary characterization of his Platonism in general is necessary. The salient features of a general characterization in the present instance are on

1 All citations of Nicholas of Cusa's works in this essay are according to the critical edition *Nicolai de Cusa Opera omnia iussu et auctoritate Academiae Litterarum Heidelbergensis* (Leipzig: Meiner, 1932–2005). Location of citations is indicated by h (=*Heidelbergensis*) + volume number + section / chapter number + line number).

2 Here, when Proclus refers to the Platonists' exceptional philosophical insight, Nicholas underlines his words and pointedly adds the gloss: *nota nostra familia* (Nicholas of Cusa, *Marginalia on Proclus' Theologia Platonis* #23). For the edition of these *marginalia*, see below.

3 Nicholas of Cusa, *Directio speculantis seu De non aliud* 14 (h XIII, 29. 22).

4 Markus L. Fuehrer, "Cusanus platonicus. References to the term 'Platonici' in Nicholas of Cusa," in *The Platonic Tradition in the Middle Ages: A Doxographic Approach*, eds. Stephen Gersh and Maarten J.F.M. Hoenen (Berlin-New York: De Gruyter, 2002), pp. 345–370 has provided a useful collection of passages illustrating Nicholas' conception of "Platonism."

5 For example, the influence of Parisian nominalism on Nicholas' theory of incommensurability has been studied by Hans-Gerhard Senger, *Die Philosophie des Nikolaus von Kues vor dem Jahre 1440. Untersuchungen zur Entwicklung einer Philosophie in der Frühzeit des Nikolaus (1430–1440)* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1971), pp. 130–154.

6 On Nicholas and Plato, see also Johannes Hirschberger, "Das Platon-Bild bei Nikolaus von Kues," in *Nicolò Cusano agli inizi del mondo moderno = Atti del Congresso Internazionale in occasione*

the one hand, the ultimate elusiveness of Plato's literary *persona* and on the other, the distorting hermeneutical lens through which that *persona* must be seen. The literary *persona* of Plato is ultimately elusive because Nicholas had access to a somewhat restricted canon of dialogues presented in Latin translation only. To the extent that it can be determined with certainty,[7] the list of texts available to him comprised *1*. the *Timaeus* in the ancient translation by Calcidius,[8] *2*. the *Parmenides* initially within Proclus' *Commentary* translated by William of Moerbeke in the thirteenth[9] and later as a separate text translated by George of Trebizond in the fifteenth century,[10] *3*. the *Meno* and *Phaedo* in the twelfth-century translations of Aristippus of Catania,[11] *4*. the *Apology, Crito*, and *Phaedrus* in the humanistic translations of Leonardo Bruni,[12] and *5*. the *Republic* in the translation of Pier Candido Decembrio.[13] The hermeneutical lens through which Plato's *persona* must be seen is distorting because Nicholas subscribes to a peculiar theory about the history of Platonism. The theory is based primarily on **[119]** a fourfold relation between Plato, St. Paul, Dionysius, and Proclus[14] in which *a*. Dionysius is directly

del V centenario della morte de Nicolò Cusano, Bressanone 6–10 settembre 1964 (Firenze, 1970), pp. 113–115.

7 Apart from the citations, references, and allusions in his original writings, the most concrete piece of evidence for Nicholas' relation to Plato is provided by the MSS of Latin translations which he is known to have possessed and, in some places, glossed. These are the Codex Cusanus 177 (*Apology, Crito, Meno, Phaedo, Phaedrus, Axiochus*), Codex Cusanus 178 (*Republic*), Codex Harleianus 3261 (*Laws*), Codex Harleianus 3652 (*Timaeus*), Codex Volterra 6201 (*Parmenides*). On the first two MSS, see Jakob Marx, *Verzeichnis der Handschriften-Sammlung des Hospitals zu Cues bei Bernkastel a. Mosel* (Trier: Selbstverlag des Hospitals, 1905, repr. Frankfurt a. M.: Minerva, 1966), pp. 166–168.

8 See Jan H. Waszink, ed., *Timaeus a Calcidio translatus commentarioque instructus* (= *Plato Latinus* IV) (London/Leiden: Warburg Institute/Brill, 1962).

9 See Carlos Steel, ed., *Proclus, Commentaire sur le Parménide de Platon, Traduction de Guillaume de Moerbeke I-II* (Leuven/Leiden: Leuven University Press/Brill, 1982, 1985). Moerbeke's translation is based on Proclus' lemmata and extends only as far as the "first hypothesis."

10 See James Hankins, *Plato in the Italian* Renaissance, 3rd impression (Leiden-New York: Brill, 1994), pp. 180–186, 429–435, Ilario Ruocco, ed., *Il Platone latino. Il Parmenide. Giorgio di Trebisonda e il cardinale Cusano* (Firenze: Olschki, 2003). George of Trebizond's translation – being independent of Proclus' commentary – covers the entire text of the *Parmenides*.

11 For these texts see Victor Kordeuter and Carlotta Labowsky, eds., *Meno interprete Henrico Aristippo* (= *Plato Latinus* I) (London: Warburg Institute, 1940) and Lorenzo Minio-Paluello, ed., *Phaedo interprete Henrico Aristippo* (= *Plato Latinus* II) (London: Warburg Institute, 1950).

12 For notes on the provenance of the *Apology, Crito,* and *Phaedrus* translations and the preface to the *Phaedrus* see Hans Baron, ed., *Leonardo Bruni Aretino. Humanistisch-philosophische Schriften, mit einer Chronologie seiner Werke und Briefe* (Leipzig-Berlin: Teubner, 1928), pp. 3–4, 172 and Hankins [n. 10], pp. 388–400. For the *Crito* text see Ernesto Berti, *Il Critone latino di Leonardo Bruni e di Rinuccio Aretino. Edizioni critiche di E. Berti e A. Carosini* (Firenze: Olschki, 1983).

13 See Hankins [n. 10], pp. 117–154.

14 Certain aspects of the broader context of Platonism would have been discovered by Nicholas in various doxographies. See p. 120 ff. below.

inspired by the apostle,[15] *b*. Dionysius' dependence on Plato is indicated by his preference for negative theology[16] and Proclus' dependence on Plato by his mode of commenting on the *Parmenides*,[17] *c*. Proclus' doctrine is similar to Dionysius',[18] *d*. Proclus is known to be subsequent to Dionysius because he cites Origen who was himself subsequent to Dionysius,[19] although it is unclear whether Proclus had actually read Dionysius.[20] An association between the elusive *persona* of Plato and the distorting hermeneutic lens occurs quite naturally to Nicholas' mind given that he further subscribes to the belief in a tradition of esoteric Platonism.

Now modern scholars who can study the complete Greek *corpus* of Plato's writings widely available since the end of the fifteenth century with the assistance of translations into the major European languagesx and who follow the assumption increasingly prevalent since the eighteenth century that a distinction between Plato's own literary *persona* and later hermeneutic accretions of "Platonism" can and should be made, will object that Nicholas' interpretation of Plato could be illuminating with respect to the mentality of the late Middle Ages and Renaissance but not with respect to that of antiquity or of the author himself. As a partial response to this objection, a few remarks may be ventured. First, an interpretation of Plato's philosophy derived from a small range of texts or a small selection of passages within such texts might not only be the result of a historical accident in which only a few texts are available. The case of Plotinus, who was familiar with the entire corpus of Plato's writings known today but performed extended textual readings perhaps only of the *Timaeus* and the *Phaedrus*, provides clear evidence of this. Second, the fact that interpretations of earlier thinkers based on the readings of a few fragments can yield philosophical insights not only with respect to the authors studied but with respect to philosophy in general is underscored in our own day by Martin Heidegger's hermeneutical practice in relation to early Greek thinking. Third, an interpretation of Plato's philosophy based on a modest range of texts or a modest selection passages within such texts can transform the elusiveness of the author's *persona* into a key unlocking certain aspects of his thought. It is here that Nicholas of Cusa, for **[120]** whom an analogy between the relation of Plato's unsystematic presentation to the elevation of his One or Good and that of Dionysius' elliptical language to the sublimity of the Christian God was probably discerned, comes into the picture.

15 *De venatione sapientiae* 30 (h XII, 90. 2–5).

16 *De beryllo* 11 (h XI/1, 12. 11–12). Cf. *DB* 27 (h XI/1, 35. 9–12). At *DVS* 21 (h XII, 59. 15–16) and 22 (h XII, 64. 13) Nicholas says that Dionysius "imitates" (*imitat*) Plato without referring to a specific doctrine.

17 *DVS* 22 (h XII, 64, 8–12) refers to the summary of the *Parmenides* in Proclus' *Theologia Platonis*.

18 *DNA* 20 (h XIII, 47. 27–28), *DVS* 22 (h XII, 64. 13–16).

19 *DVS* 22 (h XII, 64. 16).

20 *DNA* 20 (h XIII, 47. 23–26).

In studying the impact of Plato on Nicholas of Cusa and attempting to determine the character of his "Platonism," it is probably necessary to distinguish at least two chronological stages in the development of his thought. The distinction between these stages depends less on the type of Platonic philosophical doctrines exploited since the latter, with the possible exception of the "enigmas" of *possest* and *non aliud* elaborated in his last writings, were fully developed by the time of *De docta ignorantia* (1440) and remain consistent throughout his career. The distinction between the stages depends more on the type of textual sources of Platonism. Here, it is possible to distinguish an earlier stage, documented by such works as *De docta ignorantia* (1440), *De coniecturis* (1442–1443), *De deo abscondito* (1444), and *De quaerendo deum* (1445), where Nicholas' Platonism is drawn predominantly from Latin sources, and a later stage, manifested particularly in *De beryllo* (1458), *De aequalitate* (1459), *De principio* (1459), *De possest* (1460), *Directio speculantis seu De non aliud* (1461), and *De venatione sapientiae* (1462) where Greek works in Latin translation also become important sources, philosophical writings of the intervening period such as *Apologia doctae ignorantiae* (1449), *Idiota de sapientia* (1450), *Idiota de mente* (1450), and *De visione Dei* (1453) continuing in the earlier style as far as sources are concerned. Two aspects of Nicholas' handling of sources remain constant within the first and second stages. These are the use of Dionysius as the definitive formulation of the Platonic position and a feeling for the tension between Plato's and Aristotle's thought. From both these viewpoints, Nicholas differs from the twelfth-century French Platonism that is otherwise his primary model.

As we have indicated, the Platonism of Nicholas of Cusa in the earlier period of his writing – around 1440–1445 – is predominantly drawn from Latin sources. The key to understanding this stage of his intellectual development can be found in a passage of the slightly later work *Apologia doctae ignorantiae* that was written to justify his earlier philosophical position in the face of a contemporary criticism.[21] In the course of this defense, Nicholas provides the most extensive list of recommended philosophical readings that is found anywhere in his *corpus* and singles out a certain anonymous commentator on Boethius' *De Trinitate* for special praise.[22] From the surrounding context, it is easy to see that Nicholas is **[121]** referring to one or more of the twelfth-century commentaries nowadays associated with Thierry of Chartres and his students.

Thierry of Chartres was widely recognized in his own day as the leading exponent of Platonism and, although his writings went out of fashion in the next century especially in circles dominated by Aristotelian scholasticism, he enjoyed something of a revival among proto-humanists like Petrarch and anti-scholastics like

21 by Johannes Wenck.

22 *Apologia doctae ignorantiae* 35 (h II, 24. 6–7), "a man easily the most brilliant of all those that I have read" (*vir facile omnium, quos legerim, ingenio clarissimus*).

Cusanus.[23] Since Thierry's direct knowledge of Plato's writings was confined to the *Timaeus* in Calcidius' Latin translation[24] in addition to the scattering of brief quotations in the works of Cicero, Apuleius, Augustine, and other ancient authors, his Platonism represents a sophisticated amalgam of doctrines derived primarily from indirect sources. These sources consist partly of pagan writers of Platonic persuasion in late antiquity such as Calcidius the aforementioned commentator on Plato, Macrobius the author of the Neo-platonic commentary on Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis*, and Martianus Capella the author of the liberal arts handbook *De Nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*. Thierry's sources also include late ancient Christian writers among whom Boethius – whose theological tractates form the basis of most of the extant writings of Thierry's school – and Augustine are particularly prominent, and one late ancient pagan writer who had acquired a *quasi*-Christian status: "Hermes Trismegistus," the author of the dialogue *Asclepius*.[25]

The philosophy derived from this combination of sources is unified by an "immanent" Platonism not dissimilar to the Stoic-influenced Platonism of Antiochus of Ascalon's version of the *Vetus Academia* as reported in works such as Cicero's *Academica* and *Lucullus*. As a kind of theological physics derived overtly from Boethius, Thierry's philosophy has a clearly defined doctrine regarding the macrocosm. This macrocosm consists of "absolute necessity" (*necessitas absoluta*) or God, "necessity of complication" (*necessitas complexionis*) or the world of Forms, "determinate possibility" (*possibilitas determinata*) or the world of particulars, and "absolute possibility' (*possibilitas absoluta*) or matter, the reference to these four terms as "considerations" (*considerationes*) indicating that it is not different types of existent thing but different types of relation between the divine intellect and the universe or **[122]** between the human intellect and the universe that are involved.[26] The relations between the four terms in this structure, the basic idea for which seems to have been derived from Augustine's *De Genesi ad Litteram*, are further developed in a variety of ways. In some cases, a dualism of necessity and possibility based on Boethius' *Commentarii in Aristotelis 'De Interpretatione'* is introduced,[27] whereas in other cases, a dualism of enfolding and

23 On the relationship between the Platonism of Thierry of Chartres' school and the early humanists, see Stephen Gersh, "Philosophy and Humanism," in *A Companion to the Medieval World*, eds. Carol Lansing and Edward D. English (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), pp. 525–543.

24 Thierry also knew one passage of the *Parmenides* via Calcidius' *Commentarius in Timaeum* (Plato: *Parmenides* 129bc at Calcidius: *In Timaeum* 272, 276. 1–277. 3). Nicholas of Cusa quotes the same passage in an analogous context.

25 See Stephen Gersh, "Platonism, Neoplatonism, Aristotelianism: A Twelfth-Century Metaphysical System and its Sources," in *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century*, eds. Robert L. Benson and Giles Constable (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), pp. 512–534.

26 See Thierry of Chartres, *Lectiones in Boethii De Trinitate* 2. 9 (*Commentaries on Boethius by Thierry of Chartres and his School*, ed. Nikolaus M. Häring [Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1971], pp. 157, 86–91) and Clarembald of Arras, *Tractatulus in Boethii De Trinitate* 2.9 (*Life and Works of Clarembald of Arras. A Twelfth-Century Master of the School of Chartres*, ed. Nikolaus M. Häring [Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1965], p. 236, 7–14).

27 See Thierry of Chartres, *Commentum in Boethii De Trinitate* 2. 28–29 (77, 70–91).

unfolding based on Boethius' *De consolatione philosophiae* is exploited.[28] However, the most important addition to the fourfold structure is the establishment of a further structural relation between the three persons of the Trinity conceived according to an arithmetical analogy as "unity" (*unitas*), "equality" (*aequalitas*), and "connection" (*nexus*) and the first three considerations in such a way that the consubstantial persons of the transcendent godhead can be understood as the enfolding cause of the hierarchical phases of intellect's relation to the universe.[29] The basic idea for this theory seems to have come to Thierry from a heightened Pythagorean reading of Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*.

The central ideas in Thierry's version of Platonic philosophy were used and reused by Nicholas throughout his career, the four considerations forming the ground-plan of his treatment of the "contracted maximum" in *De docta ignorantia* II.[30] It is important to realize that Thierry's doctrine was seen as a solidly Christian variety of Platonism, since it contained none of the elements of Platonism deemed un-Christian since the time of the Church Fathers. At least on Nicholas' reading, the distinction between the creating God and the created world was maintained, the notion of a purposeful creation in time was not compromised, and there was no suggestion of the human soul's reincarnation. Moreover, Thierry's doctrine not only embodied a decidedly Christian variety of Platonism but was in accordance with the supreme authority on this type of philosophy: Dionysius the Areopagite. The one serious problem that Nicholas detects in the twelfth-century version of Platonic philosophy is the explicit identification of absolute possibility with matter involved in the notion of the fourth consideration.[31] Given that the distinction between the creating God and the created world must be maintained at all costs, any notion of absoluteness in the system can only be associated with the former. Nicholas therefore identifies both absolute **[123]** necessity and absolute possibility with the creating God and thereby transforms the scheme by reducing the total number of considerations from four to three.[32]

For Nicholas of Cusa in the earlier period of his work and also in the later phase increasingly, the dialogues of Plato are clearly texts to be read as well as remote sources of inspiration. In fact, one can speak of the direct influence of the dialogues on the Cusan both in terms of their philosophical *content* and in terms of their rhetorical *form*, these aspects being as intimately connected with one another for Nicholas as they had been for Plato.

28 See Thierry of Chartres, *Lectiones in Boethii De Trinitate* 2. 4 (155. 31–40), 2. 6 (156. 55–65), 2. 10 (157. 8–10).

29 See Thierry of Chartres, *Commentum in De Trinitate* 2. 30–35 (77. 92–79. 46).

30 See especially Nicholas of Cusa, *De docta ignorantia* II. 7–10 (h I, 81. 16–99. 12).

31 *DDI* II. 8 (h I, 87. 13–88. 8).

32 For a discussion of ideas derived by Nicholas from Thierry of Chartres see Werner Beierwaltes, *Denken des Einen. Studien zur neuplatonischen Philosophie und ihrer Wirkungsgeschichte* (Frankurt a. M.: Klostermann, 1985), pp. 368–384.

Turning to the question of the content of Plato's writings, one can say that readings of the *Timaeus*, *Parmenides*, and other dialogues provide Nicholas with a number of Platonic doctrines either to be absorbed into his own thinking or to be used to delineate his own position by contrast. The *Timaeus* had been read in translation throughout the Middle Ages and particularly from the early twelfth century onwards, providing a prevailingly cosmological interpretation of Plato's thought. Nicholas continues in this tradition in the second book of *De docta ignorantia* where the notion of the world-soul as presented in Plato's text – albeit attributed here loosely to *Platonici* – is explored in the context of Thierry of Chartres' doctrine of the four modes of reality. He explains that the world-soul is a certain universal form enfolding all forms.[33] He concludes that *a*. this world-soul as form does not exist actually except in a contracted sense, and *b*. the world-soul as form can be identified with God if viewed in an absolute sense, these arguments transforming the world-soul into modalities of the universe and of God, respectively. He further concludes that *c*. there is no medium between the absolute and the contracted, and *d*. there is no un-contracted mind or soul after God, these arguments removing the notion of the world-soul as a real (non-modal) mediator. The *Parmenides* by contrast introduces the possibility of a predominantly theological interpretation of Plato's thought. Although the work had become available in translation from the middle of the thirteenth century, Nicholas is seemingly the first thinker to develop a theological reading of Plato on the basis of this text. This occurs in his *De Principio* where the famous argument proving the impossibility of a plurality of beings apart from the One – associated with the Zeno and Parmenides of Plato's dialogue – is interpreted in the context of Proclus' distinction between un-participated and participated terms.[34] According to "Parmenides," the many exist as included in the One **[124]** which can function as a single subject with contradictory attributes whereas according to "Zeno," the One exists to the exclusion of the many which cannot function as a single subject with contradictory attributes, the difference between the two characters' positions resulting from the fact that they are referring to different modalities of the One: the un-participated as opposed to the participated One, or God as absolute as opposed to the universe as contracted One. In addition to his extensive use of the *Timaeus* and the *Parmenides*, certain other dialogues are cited by Nicholas of Cusa from time to time, although these references are somewhat cursory and sometimes indirect. The notion that the intellectual soul sees God and all things by turning within derived from the *Alcibiades* is cited indirectly through Proclus' *Theologia Platonis*.[35] The notion of revealing the substance of things through the analogy of light

33 *DDI* II. 9 (h I, 95. 20–23).

34 *Nicholas of Cusa, Tu quis es? (De principio)* 7. 1–5 and 30. 1–22 (h X/2b). The argument of some scholars to the effect that Nicholas in later life, under the influence of the translation of the entire *Parmenides* by George of Trebizond, started to develop a less theological approach to the dialogue is not supported by the evidence. For this argument see Ruocco [n. 10], pp. 10–12.

35 *DVS* 17 (h XII, 49. 3–5).

derived from the *Republic* is cited indirectly through Proclus' *Commentarius in Parmenidem*.[36] However, the discovery of order within the intellect through the questioning of the slave-boy is cited directly from the *Meno*[37] and the postulation of intellect as first principle of universal but not of particular things by Anaxagoras directly from the *Phaedo*.[38]

For Nicholas as for earlier writers, knowledge about Plato derived from his writings is supplemented by knowledge derived from doxographies. In addition to the reports of Plato's and the Platonists' teachings in works of Augustine such as *De Diversis Quaestionibus LXXXIII*, question 46, and *De Civitate Dei* which had been widely used during the early Middle Ages,[39] in Apuleius' *De Platone et eius Dogmate*,[40] and also in works of Aristotle such as the *Metaphysica* and **[125]** *Ethica Nicomachea* which had become available in Latin translation from the thirteenth century onwards, Nicholas makes explicit reference to two new sources of such information that had appeared in his own day. The first new doxography is Proclus' *Theologia Platonica* in the translation of Pietro Balbi (1399–1479).[41] It is noteworthy that the work is treated as a discussion of Plato's rather than Proclus' doctrine and that Plato's doctrine is depicted as primarily theological in character. Nicholas refers to it by name in several passages of *De non aliud* and *De venatione*

36 *DNA* 20 (h XIII, 48. 12–16). Indirect citation is suggested by the context, although Nicholas also had direct access to the *Republic.* The *Republic* is the only Platonic dialogue the Latin translation of which has been transmitted to us in a manuscript (*Seminario Maggiore di Bressanone A 14*) with extensive glossing in the hand of Nicholas of Cusa. These glosses represent a selection and expansion of Pier Candido Decembrio's earlier glosses on topics that presented special philosophical interest to the cardinal. They are most abundant on book VI of the *Republic* and deal particularly with the contrast of the intelligible and sensible worlds, the cosmological role of number, the comparison of the sun and the Good, the first principle's transcendence of Being, the four stages of perception represented by the divided line, and the proof of the soul's immortality. At the end of his sequence of glosses, Nicholas also went to the trouble of reproducing an important diagram by Decembrio of the four stages of perception. For a discussion of this material see Giovanni Santinello, "Glosse di mano del Cusano alla *Repubblica* di Platone," in *Rinascimento. Rivista dell'Istituto Nazionale di Studi sul Rinascimento*, 2a serie 9 (1969), pp. 117–145. On the broader context, see Mario Vegetti and Paolo Pissavino, eds., *I Decembrio e la tradizione della* Republica *di Platone tra Medioevo e Umanesimo* (Napoli: Bibliopolis, 2005).

37 *DVS* 31 (h XII, 94. 10–14).

38 *DB* 36 (h XI/1, 49. 25–50. 6).

39 On the Augustinian doxographies see Stephen Gersh, *Middle Platonism and Neoplatonism. The Latin Tradition* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986), I, pp. 403–413 and Stephen Gersh, "The Medieval Legacy from Ancient Platonism," in *The Platonic Tradition in the Middle Ages: A Doxographic Approach* [n. 4], pp. 24–30.

40 Some extant glosses reveal Nicholas' study of this text. See Pasquale Arfe, ed., *Cusanus-Texte* III. *Marginalien.* 5. *Asclepius. Hermes Trismegistus. Aus Codex Bruxellensis 10054–56* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1999).

41 Balbi's translation was completed in 1462 and survives in three MSS. For details of his work see Henri-Dominique Saffrey, "Pietro Balbi et la première traduction latine de la *Théologie platonicienne* de Proclus," in *Miscellanea Codicologica F. Masai dicata MCMLXXIX*, ed. P. Cockshaw, etc. (Gand: E. Story-Scientia S.P.R.L., 1979), pp. 425–437.

sapientiae.[42] The second new doxography was Diogenes Laertius' *Vitae Philosophorum* in the translation of Ambrogio Traversari (1386–1433).[43] This work provided Nicholas not only with a fuller discussion of Plato's theory of Forms but also with a model of writing a comparative history of philosophy. The preface to *De venatione sapientiae* describes the author's personal encounter with this text.[44]

Turning to the question of the influence of the form of Plato's writings, one can say that readings of the *Timaeus, Parmenides*, and other dialogues provide Nicholas with a richer feeling for the possibilities of both the rhetorical and the dialectical aspects of philosophical writing. As a mode of philosophical expression, the dialogue was well established among early medieval readers who would have been familiar with ancient examples of the genre in the writings of Cicero and who themselves produced similar didactic texts especially during the Carolingian period.[45] Nicholas continues in this tradition by producing a series of texts which develop the dialogue form in certain specific directions. Following the model of Cicero's *De natura deorum*, he associates specific characters with **[126]** specific philosophical doctrines in order to emphasize the relativity of viewpoints. For example, *De non aliud* has "Peter," "Ferdinand," "Nicholas," and "the Abbot" expound Proclus' *Platonic Theology*, Aristotle, Dionysius, and Plato's *Parmenides* together with Proclus commentary, respectively.[46] Nicholas sometimes reverses the normal hierarchical relation between teacher and student that had been employed in the medieval didactic dialogue in order to assign greater authority to the utterances of the student. This is designed to reflect the ideal of learned ignorance and is illustrated by the two dialogues involving the "layman" (*idiota*). Perhaps inspired by the beginning of the *Timaeus*,[47] he usually chooses the number of characters carefully in order to reflect the mathematical structure of reality

42 See below. There is evidence that Nicholas possessed some extracts of the *Theologia Platonis* translated by Ambrogio Traversari at a much earlier date, although he had not exploited this material in his own philosophical writings. See Saffrey [n. 41], pp. 426 and 436.

43 Traversari's translation was written between 1424 and 1433, circulated widely in MSS, and was printed in 1472. For details of this work see M. Gigante, "Ambrogio Traversari interprete di Diogene Laerzio," in *Ambrogio Traversari nel VI centenario della nascita (Convegno Internazionale di Studi (Camaldoli-Firenze, 15–18 settembre 1986))*, ed. G. C. Garfagnini (Firenze: Olschki, 1988), pp. 367–459. On the translator, see also Charles L. Stinger, *Humanism and the Church Fathers. Ambrogio Traversari (1386–1439) and Christian Antiquity in the Italian Renaissance* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1977).

44 *DVS* pr. (h XII, pr. 11–14).

45 On the patristic and medieval dialogue, see Peter L. Schmidt, "Zur Typologie und Literarisierung des frühchristlichen lateinischen Dialogs," in *Christianisme et formes littéraires de l'antiquité tardive en occident* (*Fondation Hardt, Entretiens* 23) (Vandoeuvres-Genève, 1977), pp. 101–190 and A. Michel, "Dialogue philosophique et vie intérieure: Cicéron, Sénèque, saint Augustin," *Helmantica* 28 (1977), pp. 353–376. For the Renaissance – unfortunately with no discussion of Nicholas of Cusa – see David Marsh, *The quattrocento Dialogue: Classical Tradition and Humanist Innovation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980).

46 See *DNA* 1 (h XIII, 3. 1–7).

47 See Plato: *Timaeus* 17a.

itself. For instance, by analogy with a *dialogus* understood as a discourse of two characters, De *Possest* is characterized as a *trialogus* or discourse of three and *De non aliud* as a *tetralogus* or discourse of four characters. The specific character of Socrates regains the priority that he had in Plato's earlier dialogues but had lost during the Middle Ages. In Nicholas' *Apologia doctae ignorantiae*, Socrates' knowledge of his own ignorance is transformed theologically into the unknowing above knowing through which Dionysius approaches God.[48]

As we have suggested, for Nicholas of Cusa in the later period of his writing – around 1458–1461 – Greek works in Latin translation also become important sources of Platonism,[49] the most important of these being Proclus' *Commentarius in Parmenidem* in the translation by William of Moerbeke and Proclus *Theologia Platonis* as translated by Pietro Balbi of which important manuscripts survive containing Nicholas' own *marginalia*.[50] Nicholas' use of these sources is stated most explicitly in *De non aliud* where the character of the Abbot undertakes the exposition of Proclus' commentary and the character of Peter that of Proclus' theological treatise,[51] and where a collection of citations **[127]** from Dionysius the Areopagite's writings is explicitly identified as such.[52] Further evidence is provided by *De venatione sapientiae* where Nicholas refers to the *Theologia Platonis* by its Latin title and states that it contains six books,[53] and where there are numerous verifiable citations both of the *Commentarius in Parmenidem* and of the *Theologia Platonis*.[54]

The influence of Proclus' work on medieval philosophers was accumulated through a series of stages. From the late Carolingian period onwards, much of Proclus' doctrine had been transmitted through the series of Latin translations of Dionysius the Areopagite that began with Eriugena, and continued with John the Saracen, Robert Grosseteste, and Ambrogio Traversari. Two further presentations of Proclus' philosophy in the form of a quasi-Euclidean set of propositions – the Arabic-Latin treatise generally known as *De causis* and the translation of Proclus' own *Elementa Theologiae* by William of Moerbeke – influenced such figures

48 See *ADI* 2–3 (h II, 2. 9–3. 5).

49 There are also some traces of influence from this material in earlier works – especially *De coniecturis* – although the main development is after *DDI* and mostly late. See Rudolf Haubst, "Die Thomas- und Proklos-Exzerpte des 'Nicolaus Treverensis' in Codicillus Strassburg 84," in *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft* 1 (1961), pp. 17–51.

50 *Marginalia* on Proclus' *Elementatio theologica* also survive although, for reasons that we cannot pursue here, these are much less detailed. For the texts of the *marginalia* see Hans-Gerhard Senger, ed., *Cusanus-Texte* III. *Marginalien.* 2. *Proclus Latinus. Die Exzerpte und Randnoten des Nikolaus von Kues zu den lateinischen Übersetzungen der Proclus-Schriften.* 2. 1 *Theologia Platonis – Elementatio theologica*, and Karl Bormann, ed., *ibid*. 2.2 *Expositio in Parmenidem Platonis* [= 2 vols.] (Heidelberg: Winter, 1986).

51 *DNA* 1 (h. XIII, 3. 2–7).

52 *DNA* 14 (h XIII, 30. 4–38. 9). Nicholas refers explicitly to the new translation by Ambrogio Traversari at this point. On Traversari see nn. 42–43.

53 *DVS* 8 (h XII, 21. 7–9).

54 *DVS* 17 (h XII, 49. 3–8) and *DVS* 22 (h XII, 64. 7–12).

as Thomas Aquinas, Henry of Ghent, and Dietrich of Freiberg in the thirteenth century. Around the same time, the encyclopaedist Henry Bate of Mechelen, a personal friend of the translator Moerbeke, makes use of the latter's fragmentary version of Proclus' *Commentarius in Timaeum*. The earliest verifiable use of Proclus' *Commentarius in Parmenidem* in the translation of William of Moerbeke as a source occurs simultaneously with the earliest verifiable use of his *Opuscula theologica* in a translation by the same hand in the *Expositio in Elementationem Theologicam Procli* of Berthold of Moosburg in the fourteenth century. Finally, the *Theologia Platonis* was translated by Pietro Balbi specifically on commission to Nicholas of Cusa who is the first Western thinker to exploit it.[55]

The philosophy set forth in Proclus' writings is the mature Platonism of late antiquity whose fundamental structure as initially formulated by Plotinus and further refined by Iamblichus is a "transcendent-immanent" Platonism quite distinct from the Stoic-influenced doctrine transmitted by Cicero. Its doctrine of the macrocosm does indeed have a theological-physical orientation similar to that expressed in Thierry of Chartres' Boethian commentaries. According to Proclus, ultimate reality when viewed statically consists of a descending series of terms in which Plotinus' system of three hypostases – the "One or Good" (*to* **[128]** *hen, tagathon*), "Intellect" (*nous*), and "Soul" (*psuchē*) – is expanded by interpolating "limit" (*peras*), "infinity" (*apeiria*) between the One and Intellect, distinguishing "being" (*ousia*), "life" (*zōē*), and "intellect" (*nous*) within Intellect, and treating each level of being as a structure composed of a "monad" (*monas*) and a "series" (*taxis*).[56] The tendency of Plotinus' thought to treat being and life on the level of Intellect as different modes of Intellect's relation to itself is weakened by the subdivision of Intellect into hypostases but strengthened by a further feature of the system. According to Proclus, ultimate reality when viewed dynamically consists of a descending sequence of processes in which Plotinus' understanding of the relation between hypostases – that each term "proceeds" (*proienai*) from and "reverts" (*epistrephein*) to its prior term – is expanded by distinguishing a triad of "remaining" (*monē*), "procession" (*proodos*), and "reversion" (*epistrophē*) in which each term is itself divisible into an analogous triad of terms and each of the latter again into an analogous triad until a triad of "father" (*patēr*), "power"

55 On the Proclean tradition in general, see Ruedi Imbach, "Le (néo)-platonisme médiéval. Proclus latin et l'école dominicaine allemande," *Revue de théologie et de philosophie* 110 (1978), pp. 427–448, Paul-Oskar Kristeller, "Proclus as a Reader of Plato and Plotinus and His Influence in the Middle Ages and in the Renaissance," in *Proclus. Lecteur et interprète des anciens. (=Actes du colloque international du CNRS, 2–4 octobre 1985)*, eds. J. Pépin and H.-D. Saffrey (Paris: C.N.R.S., 1987), pp. 191–211, Loris Sturlese, "Il dibattito sul Proclo latino nel Medioevo fra l'Università di Parigi e lo Studium di Colonia," in *Proclus et son influence. Actes du Colloque de Neuchâtel, juin 1985*, eds. G. Boss and G. Seel (Zürich: Éditions du Grand Midi, 1987), pp. 261–285.

56 See Stephen Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena: An Investigation of the Prehistory and Evolution of the Pseudo-Dionysian Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 1978), pp. 17–121.

(*dunamis*), and "intellect" (*nous*) is reached.[57] Although Proclus' doctrine of the macrocosm does have a theological-physical orientation similar to that of Thierry of Chartres, it differs from it radically as a pagan from a Christian world-view. For the ancient Greek Platonist, both the monad and series attached to the One or Good in the static viewpoint and the division into the triad of father, intellect, and power in the dynamic viewpoint represent a hypostatic plurality of "henads or gods" (*henades, theoi*).

In his later writings, Nicholas makes a great effort to incorporate ideas derived from Proclus into the basic version of Platonic philosophy that he had constructed earlier on the basis of Thierry of Chartres' work.[58] Since this version of Platonism was overtly pagan in character, it was natural that he would adapt or **[129]** reject different ideas in order to bring it into line with Christian doctrine in general and the teaching of Dionysius the Areopagite in particular. This approach is illustrated by his lengthy discussions in *De beryllo*[59] and *De non aliud*[60] of the doctrine of the three principles that had been stated in Plato's second *Epistula* and summarized in Proclus' *Theologia Platonis*. According to Nicholas' thoroughly Christian interpretation, Plato and Proclus see everything in three modes of being:[61] an absolute and un-participated God, an intellect participated by many gods and intellects that is the first creature, and a world soul participated by many souls, these modes of being corresponding to the Father who is the universal cause, Wisdom who is generated by the Father and executes his intention, and Spirit who is the motion uniting all things to the Father respectively.[62] Nicholas' approach is further illustrated

57 See Stephen Gersh, *Kinēsis Akinētos. A Study of Spiritual Motion in the Philosophy of Proclus* (Leiden: Brill, 1973).

58 For a summary of Nicholas' thought with special reference to its background in late ancient philosophy see Giovanni Santinello, *Saggi sull'"umanesimo" di Proclo* (Bologna: Casa Editrice Pàtron, 1966), Werner Beierwaltes, *Identität und Differenz. Zum Prinzip cusanischen Denkens* (= *Rheinisch-Westfälische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Vorträge* G 220), Opladen 1977. For detailed analysis of ideas derived from Proclus see Werner Beierwaltes: "Das seiende Eine. Zur neuplatonischen Interpretation der zweiten Hypothesis des platonischen Parmenides. Das Beispiel Cusanus," in *Proclus et son influence* [n. 55], pp. 287–297, Giovanni Santinello, "Il neoplatonismo di Nicolò Cusano," in *Il Neoplatonismo nel Rinascimento*, ed. P. Prini (Roma: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1993), pp. 103–115, Werner Beierwaltes, "Centrum tocius vite. Zur Bedeutung von Proklos' *Theologia Platonis* im Denken des Cusanus," in *Proclus et la Théologie platonicienne. Actes du colloque international de Louvain (13–16 mai 1998) en l'honneur de H.-D. Saffrey et L.G. Westerink*, eds. Alain-Philippe Segonds et Carlos Steel (Leuven/Paris: Leuven University Press/Les Belles Lettres, 2000), pp. 629–651, and Karl Bormann, "Affirmation und Negation. Der *Parmenides*-Kommentar des Proklus in Nikolaus von Kues' Schrift *Tu quis es*," in *600 Jahre Nikolaus von Kues (1401–2001). Tradition und Aktualität Negativer Theologie = Theologische Quartalschrift* 181 (2001), pp. 84–96.

59 *DB* 15 (h XI/1, 14. 16–15. 10), 21 (h XI/1, 25. 19–21), and 23 (h XI/1, 27. 19–30. 7).

60 *DNA* 21 (h XIII, 51. 9–31).

61 These modes of being correspond to the first three considerations in Thierry of Chartres' presentation of Platonic philosophy.

62 *DB* 23 (h XI/1, 27. 11–30. 7). This complex interpretation that combines Platonic, Proclean, and Christian elements also includes a (medieval) Aristotelian component. Thus, the first mode of

by his numerous references in *De beryllo*,[63] *De principio*,[64] *De non aliud*,[65] and *De venatione sapientiae*[66] to the doctrine of the One and the One-Being that had been set forth in Plato's *Parmenides* and expanded in Proclus' commentary According to a circumspect reading that distinguishes Christian from non-Christian features, Plato and Proclus are said to be correct in distinguishing as two modes of being,[67] the One that is the absolute and un-participated cause of the multiplicity of things and the One-Being that is the contracted and participated cause of the multiplicity and the being of things,[68] but incorrect in arguing that the One-Being is participated in various ways by gods,[69] is a multiplicity co-eternal with the One,[70] and is a divine species participating in the One.[71]

It is not easy to summarize Nicholas of Cusa's "Platonism" in a few words since close inspection has revealed it to be an extremely complex hermeneutical **[130]** phenomenon. Although grounded in the *Timaeus*, it is for the most part derived indirectly through a variety of pagan and Christian Latin writers of late antiquity, the model for the construction of such a system being the twelfth-century Platonism of Thierry of Chartres and his followers. As we have seen, this primarily "physical" doctrine is given a more "theological" slant by Nicholas himself. Here, Plato's *Second Letter* and *Parmenides* in Proclus' interpretation and newly available "doxographies" in the shape of Diogenes Laertius' *De Vitis Philosophorum* and Proclus' *Theologia Platonis* play the crucial role. The entire physical-theological system of Nicholas is unified by the belief that Proclus and Dionysius the Areopagite are in substantial agreement and that both thinkers are close to the spirit of Plato.

How Nicholas viewed the Platonic written *corpus* as a conceptual unit is not absolutely clear. We can gauge from his own report in *De venatione sapientiae* the enthusiasm with which he studied his recently acquired Latin translation of Diogenes Laertius. But he was probably interested in the *life* of Plato more for what it said about specific Platonic doctrines than for what it said about the structure of the Platonic *corpus*. As far as we can tell from observing his practice in *De venatione sapientiae*, Nicholas does not seem to have exploited the dichotomous classification of the dialogues according to methodological types or their organization as a collection into nine groups of four dialogues as reported

being is an efficient, formal, and final cause and contains the Forms of all things, the second is intellect ruling the heavens, and the third is the noble soul.

63 *DB* 12 (h XI/1, 12. 19–13. 3).

64 *DP* 8. 11–18 and 39. 1–33 (h X/2b).

65 *DNA* 20–22 (h XIII, 47. 29–53. 30).

66 *DVS* 21–22 (h XII. 59. 1–64. 20).

67 These modes of being correspond to the first and second considerations in Thierry of Chartres' presentation of Platonism. See pp. 122–123 and n. 26.

68 *DP* 39. 1–33 (h X/2b).

69 *DP* 40. 1–12 (h X/2b).

70 *DP* 25. 1–18 (h X/2b).

71 *DVS* 21 (h XII, 62. 1–12).

by Diogenes Laertius.[72] Presumably, the dichotomous classification seemed narrow in its description of the *Parmenides* which he understood, in agreement with Proclus and Dionysius, as the central theological text. However, he must have approved of the tetralogy classification in providing an arrangement of the dialogues which, according to Pythagorean criteria, reflected the structure of reality. According to the evidence, Nicholas of Cusa exploited only the *Timaeus* and the *Parmenides* in a textually precise manner, and we are simply left to speculate about how he might have dealt with the other dialogues of Plato. He would presumably have held the *Symposium* for its account of the soul's ascent to the Form of Beauty, the *Philebus* for its discussion of the Cause, Limit, Infinity, and the Mixed, and the *Sophist* for the discussion of the "greatest kinds" of Being, Sameness, Otherness, Motion, and Rest in the very highest esteem.[73] Although he was already familiar with these ideas indirectly through the relevant discussions in Proclus and Dionysius and had developed them extensively in his own work, the confirmation of their origin in a uniquely authoritative ancient source would have brought him satisfaction. Given the cardinal's preoccupation with the theme of concord, there can be little doubt that he would have interpreted the dialogues of the Platonic corpus as illuminating different aspects of a *unified* system of thought.

[131] Given that Nicholas of Cusa had developed such a thorough and consistent system of Platonism despite the absence of Plato's own *persona* and perhaps because of that very absence, for him to have been suddenly confronted with the complete set of dialogues that Ficino had to deal with a generation later would have been tantamount to throwing the proverbial wrench into the well-oiled machine. The case of Nicholas' relation to Plato would have become analogous to his relation to Dionysius the Areopagite. Although humanists such as Erasmus and Valla were beginning to undermine the notion that the "Dionysian" *corpus* was a product of the apostolic period, Nicholas shows no awareness of the problem in his writings. Confronted by more evidence to the effect that Proclus' and Dionysius' teachings exhibit a metaphysical systematization unwarranted by the original writings of Plato, Nicholas would probably have been equally silent.

72 Diogenes Laertius, *De Vitis Philosophorum* III. 47–66, 222. 1–232. 4 Marcovich.

73 In the case of the *Symposium*, he was perhaps familiar with an extract in translation (again by Leonardo Bruni).

11

NICHOLAS OF CUSA'S REWRITING OF THE ANSELMIAN *PROSLOGION*

[79] The questions concerning the nature and extent of Nicholas of Cusa's debts to Anselm of Canterbury's thought have been considered most recently in an article entitled "Nicholas of Cusa's Intellectual Relationship to Anselm of Canterbury" by Jasper Hopkins.[1] According to this distinguished modern interpreter, Nicholas reveals considerable indebtedness to Anselm in at least five areas: the description of God, the use of a priori reasoning, the assumption of eternal truth, the theory of atonement, and the relation between faith and reason. Nevertheless, although Hopkins rightly decides to emphasize Nicholas' affinities with the medieval world as well as his anticipations of the modern era, it becomes clear that the fifteenth-century writer's indebtedness towards his predecessor is combined with considerable independence. It is this complex relation of semi-dependence – which one might call a 'creative re-writing' – that I wish to consider in the present essay. Without dissenting from the conclusions of Hopkins' essay, my intention is to venture into a deeper consideration of the first (and to some degree also of the second and third) area of Nicholas' indebtedness to Anselm. The focus of this analysis will be the fifteenth-century thinker's individual and innovative treatment of what is nowadays called the 'ontological argument' but was formerly known as the *ratio Anselmi*.

This argument is, of course, stated in the *Proslogion*. In his preface, Anselm characterizes the one argument of the *Proslogion* as somehow complementing or completing the many arguments of the *Monologion* in that this argument is sufficient *a* to prove itself and *b* to prove that God truly exists, that he is the supreme good which does not depend on anything else but on which everything else depends in order to be and to be well, and that he is whatever else we believe concerning the divine substance.[2] The argument obviously begins the main discussion **[80]** of the *Proslogion*, although it is difficult to determine how far it extends within the treatise. That Anselm clearly intends this argument to be a

1 *Cusanus, The Legacy of Learned Ignorance*, ed. Peter J. Casarella (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2006), pp. 54–73.

2 Anselm of Canterbury, *Proslogion*, pr. (*Anselmi Cantuariensis Opera Omnia*, ed. F. S. Schmitt, Edinburgh: Nelson, 1946, pr., I, 93. 1–10).

self-evident axiom of human reason reflecting the self-sufficient nature of the divine substance would suggest that the argument represents only the content of chapters two to four. But that he also envisages his argument as proving not only the existence but also the nature of the divine substance would require us to understand the argument as extending throughout the treatise.[3] Fortunately, our purpose here is not to establish Anselm's intentions regarding the argument but rather to consider Nicholas of Cusa's reaction to it.

Four aspects of the *ratio Anselmi* seem particularly relevant here. First, there is the absence of a specified relation between the two definitions of God. Thus, God is 'something than which a greater cannot be thought' (*aliquid quo nihil maius cogitari possit*) but also 'something greater than can be thought' (*quiddam maius quam cogitari possit*).[4] The relation between the two definitions might perhaps be specified by associating the first with the fact that God exists and the second with the manner of God's existence. Second, we find an emphasis upon the process of demonstration. The complementary relation between the arguments of the *Monologion* and the argument of the *Proslogion* underlines this aspect. According to the methodology explicitly stated in the earlier treatise, whatever conclusions were to be drawn from the various inquiries had to be based not on scriptural authority but on the 'necessity'(*necessitas*) of reason.[5] With emphasis placed on the necessity, it is here the contrast with *authority* that perhaps most delineates the field of inquiry. Clearly it corresponds to an emphasis upon the process of demonstration. Third, there is the absence of distinction between the kinds of maxima implied in the two definitions of God. In principle, a distinction between the idea that God is the greatest thing that does exist – where the maximum is actual – and the idea that God is the greatest thing that could exist – where the maximum is potential – might be invoked at this point. Finally, we find a contextualization in dialectic. The complementary relation between the arguments of the *Monologion* and the argument of the *Proslogion* also underlines this **[81]** aspect. According to the methodology explicitly stated in the earlier treatise, whatever conclusions were to be drawn from the various inquiries had to be based not on scriptural authority but on the necessity 'of reason' (*rationis*). With emphasis placed on the reason, it is now the contrast with *scripture* that perhaps most delineates the field of inquiry. Clearly it corresponds to a contextualization in dialectic.

Nicholas of Cusa refers to this cluster of ideas many times in the course of his literary career. Chronologically speaking, a list of the most explicit citations[6]

3 For a general discussion of this question, see Stephen Gersh, "Anselm of Canterbury," in *A History of Twelfth-Century Western Philosophy*, ed. Peter Dronke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 255–278.

4 *Proslogion* 2 (I, 101. 4–5); 15 (I, 112. 14–15).

5 *Monologion*, pr. (I, 7. 9–11).

6 All citations of Nicholas' works will be from the Heidelberg Academy edition: *Nicolai de Cusa Opera omnia iussu et auctoritate Academiae Litterarum Heidelbergensis* (Hamburg: F. Meiner, 1932). Individual works are cited by the traditional book and chapter numbers, with volume, section (or page), and line numbers of the Heidelberg edition given in parentheses.

would extend from his first major philosophical work *De Docta Ignorantia* (1440), through *De Quaerendo Deo* (1445), *Apologia Doctae Ignorantiae* (1449), *Idiota, De Sapientia* (1450), *De Visione Dei* (1453), *De Beryllo* (1458), *De Principio* (1459), *De Non Aliud* (1461), and *De Venatione Sapientiae* (1462), to his final essay in the field of philosophy *De Apice Theoriae* (1464).[7] Although Nicholas in every case makes a brief allusion to rather than a detailed analysis of Anselm's argument,[8] his developments of its conceptual and methodological implications are far-reaching. For example, when Nicholas asserts that one can conceive a God who is greater than can be conceived,[9] he specifies the two definitions as the affirmative and negative aspects of a single relation. Moreover, his argument that any questioning about God's existence presupposes that existence[10] reduces the emphasis upon the process of demonstration. Again, when Nicholas explains that the God than which a greater cannot be conceived and the God who is greater than can be conceived are both maximal,[11] he specifies the two definitions as a distinction between kinds of maxima. Finally, his analogy between the beryl **[82]** stone and the maximum based on the trajectory of vision[12] replaces the contextualization in dialectic with a contextualization in geometry.

In order to understand the nature of such doctrinal modifications of the *ratio Anselmi* a little better, we must examine the metaphysical context in which they occurred first in a general way and second with respect to each of the four aspects distinguished As usual for a thinker in the Neoplatonic tradition, it is possible to consider Nicholas' doctrine either from its more objective and ontological or from its more subjective and epistemological viewpoint.[13] His specification of the two definitions of God as the negative and affirmative aspects of a single relation and as a distinction between kinds of maxima can be understood with respect to the former viewpoint, and his reduction of emphasis upon the process of demonstration and his replacement of the contextualization in dialectic by a contextualization in geometry with respect to the latter.[14]

7 For these citations, see *De Quaerendo Deo* (h IV, 5. 7–8), *Apologia Doctae Ignorantiae* (h II, 8. 15–16), *De Principio* (h X/2b, 26. 16), *De Apice Theoriae* (h XII, 11. 2–4) – the other passages will be discussed in detail below.

8 Anselm's actual name is attached to the argument at *De Venatione Sapientiae* 26 (h XII, 77. 5–6). Elsewhere we find anonymous allusions to what was, obviously, an argument well known to most of Nicholas' readers.

9 *Idiota de Sapientia* II (h V^2, 28. 12–13), *De Visione Dei* 1 (h VI 5, 4–6).

10 *IDS* II (h V^2, 29. 18–30. 12).

11 *De Beryllo* (h XI/1, 8. 5–6), *DVS* 26 (h XII, 77. 2–6).

12 *DB* (h XI/1, 8. 5–9).

13 For an example of such an analysis of the Neoplatonic tradition before Nicholas of Cusa, see Stephen Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena: An Investigation of the Prehistory and Evolution of the Pseudo-Dionysian Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 1978). The distinction is a useful one provided that one does not unconsciously lapse into a post-Kantian sense of 'subjective.' This tendency somewhat weakened the otherwise useful analyses of Nicholas' thought by the German scholars who revived this study in the early twentieth century and were mostly Neo-Kantians by training.

14 Two articles by Siegfried Dangelmayr, "Anselm und Cusanus," in *Analecta Anselmiana* 3 (1972), pp. 112–140 and "Maximum und cogitare bei Anselm und Cusanus. Zur Problematik des

Nicholas' objective theory

The main lines of this theory, which did not change substantially during the course of Nicholas' career, are set out in *De Docta Ignorantia*.[15] **[83]** Here, we may perhaps distinguish three philosophical ideas which the fifteenth-century writer shares with his predecessors in the Neoplatonic tradition: the oppositional structure with a privileged term, the continuum, and the combination of the continuum with a disjunction; and three ideas representing innovations on the later writer's part: the new privileged terms, the continuum as coincidence of opposites or as fourfold structure, and the widening of the disjunction. These two sets of ideas will be distinguished in order to simplify our exposition of Nicholas' thought. In practice, the writer himself often interprets the first set in terms of the second and vice versa.

1.1 The oppositional structure with a privileged term

For Nicholas of Cusa and his Neoplatonic sources, reality in the objective[16] sense consists of a series of oppositions each containing a superior (+) and an inferior (−) term, the most important of these oppositions being unity (+) and multiplicity (−), sameness (+) and otherness (−), rest (+) and motion (−), and eternity (+) and time (−). This structure emerges clearly in *De Docta Ignorantia* II where Nicholas explains his general theory of the relation between God and the creature in the greatest detail.[17] He also applies this structure to the relation between the God

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Proslogion-Arguments," in *Analecta Anselmiana* 4/1 (1975), pp. 203–210 are useful in connection with the present topic. In particular, the themes of the role of the *coincidentia oppositorum* and of the reduced emphasis upon demonstration in Nicholas' reading of Anselm to be developed below were noted by Dangelmayr.

15 The present author remains unconvinced by certain modern interpretations which stress the developmental side of Nicholas' thought. The undeniable tensions there between different philosophical positions are mostly to be explained in terms of the dynamic, flexible, and 'conjectural' aspects of his thinking. New formulations appear at different points in Nicholas' career, for example the *possest* and the *non aliud* of the later treatises. However, these are mostly explicable as interpretations of his own earlier positions, the process of self-interpretation climaxing in the treatise *De Venatione Sapientiae* of 1462 where everything passes in review. Useful 'developmental' accounts in English are: Pauline Moffitt Watts, *Nicolaus Cusanus: A Fifteenth-Century Vision of Man* (Leiden: Brill, 1982) and the collected essays of F. Edward Cranz, *Nicholas of Cusa and the Renaissance*, eds. Thomas M. Izbicki and Gerald Christianson (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000).

16 The same applies to reality in the subjective sense. As we shall see, reality in the objective sense and reality in the subjective sense cannot be totally separated from one another.

17 *De Docta Ignorantia* II. 1–3 (h I, 61. 1–72. 22) – on oppositional structure containing superior and inferior term as a logical principle see especially Nicholas' remarks at *DDI* II. 1 (h I 61. 1–64. 13). In practice, Nicholas often combines the superior term of one opposition with the inferior term of another, for example unity (+) and otherness (−) in *De Coniecturis* I. 9 (h III, 37. 1–43. 5). Oppositional structure in Nicholas work is discussed by Werner Beierwaltes, *Identität und Differenz. Zum Prinzip cusanischen Denkens* (Rheinisch-Westfälische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Vorträge G 220), Opladen 1977.

who is the unity of geometrical figures and the multiplicity of such figures,[18] to the relation between the one exemplar and the multiple exemplars of the Platonists,[19] and to the relation between the one being and the multiple substances and accidents of the Aristotelians.[20]

1.2 The continuum

[84] That the mutually opposed terms represent poles of a continuum is indicated by Nicholas' description of the universe as proceeding from God 'through a simple emanation' (*per simplicem emanationem*). The writer clearly underlines the *simplicity* of the process – by stating that all the parts of the universe come into being simultaneously with the whole, contrary to the doctrine of Avicenna and other philosophers that intelligence precedes higher soul and higher soul precedes nature – and also clearly stresses the *emanative* character of the process.[21] When the simplicity of the process is further specified by saying that on one side of the continuum, God's unity is a unity 'to which no multiplicity is opposed' (*cui non opponitur . . . multitudo*),[22] and that on the other side of the continuum, the creature's unity 'falls without proportion' (*cadat absque proportione*) from the unity of God,[23] we can further conclude that the continuum can be viewed exclusively from the side of one of its poles, and that the contradictory terms can also be viewed as overlapping or coextensive.[24]

1.3 The combination of the continuum with a disjunction

In the objective or ontological sphere, the continuum always implies a disjunction and vice versa According to Nicholas, it is not the case that God's unity and sameness are the cause of multiplicity and difference in the creature but rather the creature's own failure to achieve the unity and sameness in God – a situation implying a disjunction in the causal connection.[25] On the other hand, it *is* the case that God's unity and sameness are the cause of the multiplicity and difference in the creature, rather than simply the creature's failure to achieve the unity **[85]** and sameness in God – a situation implying a continuity in the causal connection.[26]

18 *DDI* I. 10 (h I, 19. 15–21. 25).
19 *DDI* I. 17 (h I, 33. 13–20).
20 *DDI* I. 18 (h I, 36. 5–12).
21 By 'emanative' one means 'dynamically unfolding.' Nicholas most frequently uses the pair of terms: 'enfolding' (*complicatio*) and 'unfolding' (*explicatio*) to express this idea.
22 *DDI* I. 24 (h I, 49. 3–13). Cf. *DDI* I. 2 (h I, 7. 8–9); I. 4 (h I, 10. 26–7); I. 16 (h I, 30. 19–22); II. 2–3 (h I, 65. 11–72. 22).
23 *DDI* II. 4 (h I, 73. 23–6).
24 It is because of these implications that God's being is identified with his creating (*DDI* II 2 (h I, 66. 24–5)) and God's possibility with his actuality (*DDI* I. 16 (h I, 30. 8–18)).
25 *DDI* II. 2 (h I, 65. 11–66. 6), II. 3 (h I, 71.1–10).
26 *DDI* II 3 (h I, 71. 1–10).

This entire argument is also applied to God's rest and eternity with respect to the creature's motion and time.[27]

2.1 The new privileged terms

Beginning in his earliest works,[28] Nicholas introduces at least two oppositions containing a superior (+) and an inferior (−) term which had either not been utilized or at least had not been extensively utilized by earlier Neoplatonists. These are 'absolute' (*absolutum*) (+) and 'contracted' (*contractum*) (−) and 'infinite' (*infinitum*) (+) and 'finite'(*finitum*) (−). Given that in both these cases there is said to be a superior term (+) which precludes opposition and an inferior term (−) which allows it, Nicholas is here presenting two oppositions which have the peculiarity of challenging the nature of opposition itself.[29] That 'absolute' means something which is not related to, determined from, or limited by another term is indicated by the apparent derivation of the concept from twelfth-century Platonism.[30] One of the principal aims of *De Docta Ignorantia* is to replace a fourfold cosmological scheme of secular origin consisting of absolute necessity, necessity of involvement, determinate possibility, and absolute possibility with a more implicitly Christian threefold cosmological structure consisting of absolute maximum, contracted maximum, and simultaneously absolute and contracted maximum.[31] A close inspection of terminology in these two schemes reveals that the notion of absolute is set in opposition to the notions of involvement and determinacy. Regarding 'infinite' there **[86]** are probably two things to note. First, the term 'infinite' is employed as a synonym for absolute.[32] However, there is a complication in that we also encounter in Nicholas' texts: the term 'infinite' applied to both absolute and contracted,[33] and the term 'contracted' applied to both infinite and finite.[34] Secondly, the term 'infinite' is employed as a synonym for negative.[35] Obviously this sense of

27 *DDI* II. 2 (h I, 66. 24–67. 6).

28 Nicholas introduces a number of new terms in his later writings: for example, 'actual-possible' (*possest*) and 'non-other' (*non aliud*). The interpretation of these terms presents special problems which we will not discuss here.

29 See the passages listed in n. 22.

30 We may consider 'contracted' to be defined in opposition to 'absolute'.

31 For the Platonists' fourfold, see *DDI* II. 7–10 (h I, 81. 16–99. 12); for Nicholas' threefold (which underlies the entire structure of *De Docta Ignorantia*), see *DDI* I. 2 (h I, 7. 1–8. 17); II. 4 (h I, 72. 23–73. 7), the use of terminology in *DDI* I. 6 (h I, 13. 12–14. 21) and II. 2 (h I, 66. 7–11) suggesting a linkage between the two schemes. The Platonists' scheme is derived from Thierry of Chartres who in turn had derived it from Boethius.

32 *DDI* I. 5 (h I, 11. 23–12. 21).

33 At *DDI* II. 1 (h I, 64. 14–65. 10) Nicholas describes the former as 'negatively' (*negative*) and the latter as 'privatively' (*privative*) infinite. Cf. II. 4 (h I, 73. 22–74. 4).

34 At *DDI* II. 1 (h I, 64. 14–65. 10). Nicholas explains that the contracted term's privative infinity is infinite and finite in different respects.

35 *DDI* I. 26 (h I, 55. 25–56. 1).

negative – which is opposed to affirmative by Nicholas in the context of divine naming – is not a privative one.

2.2 The continuum as coincidence of opposites or as fourfold structure

Nicholas' development of the idea that the mutually opposed terms represent poles of a continuum represents one of his greatest innovations. It is based on interpreting the relation between God and the creature in terms of *a* a coincidence of opposites – in which the notion of continuum excludes any disjunction – and *b* a fourfold structure – in which the notions of continuum and disjunction are balanced. In *De Docta Ignorantia*, the notion of a coincidence of opposites (A/non-B = B/non-A) is applied to various sets of terms defining God with respect to what we might term his transcendence and immanence.[36] Because the continuum as coincidence of opposites involves neither opposed nor mediating terms, it contrasts with the continuum as fourfold structure which involves both opposed and mediating terms.[37] In *De Docta Ignorantia*, the notion of a fourfold structure (A/non-B, A/B, non-A/B, non-A/non-B) is applied to various conjectures about God's relation to the creature: for example, the notion that God's truth is that either **[87]** something is, or both is and is not, or is not, or neither is nor is not.[38] The relation between the notions of coincidence of opposites and of fourfold structure is an extremely subtle one, and Nicholas emphasizes that the former is not to be completely separated from the latter but somehow discovered by a more elevated mode of thinking within it.[39]

2.3 The widening of the disjunction

As we have seen, Nicholas' insistence that the cause of multiplicity and difference in the creature is the creature's failure to achieve the unity and sameness in God although God's unity and sameness is in a sense also the cause of multiplicity and difference in the creature, introduces a disjunction into the continuum of causal connection. This disjunction is widened by his further argument that the sphere of the creature is dominated by proportion – which represents a specific mathematical form of multiplicity and difference – whereas there is no proportion between

36 *DDI* I. 2 (h I, 7. 1–8. 17); I. 4 (h I, 10. 1–11. 22); I. 16–17 (h I, 30. 5–35. 12); I. 21 (h I, 42. 5–44. 9), etc. As we shall see, the most important term signifying transcendence is 'maximum' while the most important term signifying immanence is 'minimum'.

37 See especially the discussion of the relation between absolute and contracted terms at *DDI* II. 4 (h I, 73. 8–74. 24).

38 This illustration is taken from *DDI.* I. 6 (h I, 13. 12–14. 21). In a passage following on closely from that cited in the previous note, Nicholas gives as examples of fourfold the numbers 1, 10, 100, 1000, four types of universal, etc. (*DDI* II. 6 (h I, 79. 1–81. 15)).

39 *DDI* II. 5 (h I, 76. 1–78. 29). Exploration of various combinations of the notions of coincidence of opposites and of fourfold structure is a major preoccupation of *De Coniecturis*. See for example the important discussion in *DC* I. 11(h III, 58. 1–59. 28).

the creature and God.[40] Given that the relation between God and the creature is the paradigmatic instance of the relation between object and subject, analysis of the epistemological consequences of this widening of the disjunction becomes a major preoccupation of *De Docta Ignorantia*.

3 The relation between the two definitions of God

The objective or ontological theory derived from Neoplatonism and especially the innovations introduced into that theory by Nicholas himself provide the framework within which the two definitions of God furnished by the *ratio Anselmi* can be given a new interpretation. For example, *De Docta Ignorantia* relates the first and second definitions by stating that we can only attain God in an incomprehensible manner, because that than which a greater cannot be – 'since it is simply and **[88]** absolutely greater than can be comprehended by us'[41] – is infinite truth. The relation between the first and second definitions established by the conjunction *cum* ('since') clearly corresponds to the relation between the transcendence and immanence of God which is the main type of coincidence of opposites discussed in this treatise.[42]

Among later texts which develop this argument further, *Idiota de Sapientia* II establishes a relation between the first and second definitions and then interprets this relation in terms of the fourfold structure. Here, the orator's question how one can conceive a God who is greater than can be conceived is answered first in terms of that distinction between affirmative and negative divine naming which has been so well established in the earlier philosophical tradition. But then a more complex distinction is introduced:

> There is also a consideration of God of a kind where neither affirmation nor negation befits him but according to which he is above all affirmation and negation. In this case, the answer is to deny affirmation and negation and their combination. Thus, when it is asked whether God exists, according to affirmation one must reply on the basis of the presupposition: namely, that he exists and indeed is the absolute presupposed existence itself. According to negation one must reply that he does not exist,

40 *DDI* I. 1–3 (h I, 5. 1–9. 28); I. 19 (h I, 37. 11–39. 21), etc.

41 *DDI* I. 4 (h I, 10. 4–5) *simpliciter et absolute cum maius sit, quam comprehendi per nos possit*. Nicholas has already stated this 'simplified' version of the first definition at *DDI* I. 2 (h I, 7. 4–5).

42 In a sense, the two definitions thereafter remain permanently associated with the two aspects of Nicholas' notion of *docta ignorantia*, i.e. the 'learning' and the 'ignorance.' This association is still detectable in a late treatise such as *De Non Aliud*. Near the beginning of this text, Nicholas speaks of God as that which is greater than can be conceived (*DNA* 4 (h XIII, 8. 23–24)). Towards the end, he says that God is that than which a prior cannot be conceived (*DNA* 22 (h XIII, 52. 5)). These two statements are connected by the paradoxical formulation – attributed to Dionysius the Areopagite – that the one thing known about God is that he precedes all knowing and conceiving (*DNA* 14 (h XIII, 29. 26–28)). On the last point cf. *DQD* (h IV, 5. 7–8).

> since in this ineffable manner of speaking nothing at all that can be said befits him. According to the assumption that he is above all affirmation and negation one must reply that he neither is absolute existence nor is not absolute existence nor is and is not absolute existence simultaneously. Rather, he is above these.[43]

[89] This passage is instructive in that it identifies the negative (non-A/B), affirmative (A/non-B), and combined (A/B) terms of the fourfold structure with the negative, affirmative, and combined divine names (non-existence, existence, non-existence and existence), respectively. This leaves the neutral (non-A/non-B) term of the fourfold structure free to be associated with the definition of God as that which is greater than can be thought.

Several passages in *De Visione Dei* establish a relation between the first and second definitions, and then interpret this relation in terms of the coincidence of opposites, the fourfold structure, and the widened disjunction.[44] Having established from the beginning of the treatise that the God who is greater than can be thought is both subject and object of vision,[45] Nicholas goes on to develop this argument by transforming the notions of a coincidence of opposites – exemplified with the absoluteness and contractedness of God[46] – into the notion if a circle – where every divine name becomes convertible with every other divine name[47] – and then into the image of the circular 'wall of paradise' which separates us from God.[48] The argument becomes particularly interesting when – with an implicit transformation of a circle into a square – the fourfold structure utilized in other texts comes to the fore. Nicholas here writes: "You, O Lord . . . move with **[90]** all things that move and you rest with all things that are at rest. And because some things are found to move while others are at rest, then you, O Lord, are

43 *IDS* II (h V^2, 32. 14–24) *Est deinde consideratio de deo, uti sibi nec positio nec ablatio convenit, sed prout est supra omnem positionem et ablationem. Et tunc responsio est negans affirmationem et negationem et copulationem. Ut, cum quaereretur, an deus sit, secundum positionem respondendum ex praesupposito, scilicet eum esse et hoc ipsam absolutam praesuppositam entitatem. Secundum ablationem vero respondendum eum non esse, cum illa via ineffabili nihil conveniat omnium, quae dici possunt. Sed secundum quod est supra omnem positionem et ablationem respondendum eum nec esse, absolutam scilicet entitatem, nec non esse nec utrumque simul, sed supra*.

44 The connection between the two definitions of Anselm's *Proslogion* and Nicholas' argument in *De Visione Dei* is discussed in the first half of an excellent article by Donald F. Duclow, "Anselm's Proslogion and Nicholas of Cusa's Wall of Paradise," *Downside Review* 100 (1982), pp. 22–30. This author's conclusion is that the threefold structure of finite, limit, and infinite which he sees as implicit in Nicholas' metaphor of the wall of paradise "expresses the implicit structure of the Proslogion." (p. 26). Duclow rightly notes that there are also significant differences between Anselm and Nicholas, e.g. that Nicholas views the divine nature as inherently unknowable whereas Anselm attributes our ignorance of God to sin, and that Nicholas has a systematic doctrine of infinity whereas Anselm follows the traditional Augustinian model.

45 *De Visione Dei* 1 (h VI, 5. 1ff).

46 *DVD* 2 (h VI, 7. 1–18).

47 *DVD* 3 (h VI, 8. 11–14).

48 *DVD* 9 (h VI, 37. 7–12)

simultaneously at rest and in movement. . . . However, you are neither moved nor at rest because you are super-exalted and absolute with respect to all things that can be conceived or named."[49] This passage seems to combine the coincidence of opposites with the fourfold structure *a* by establishing a coincidence between the neutral term (non-A/non-B) and the affirmative, combined, and negative terms, and *b* by treating the combined term (A/B) itself as a coincidence of the affirmative and negative terms. In the former case, the opposites are specified as absolute and contracted whereas in the latter, they are specified as moving and at rest. A few pages later after the introduction of the 'wall of paradise' image, the fourfold structure reappears: "And when I see you in the paradise, O Lord, which that wall of the coincidence of opposites encircles, I see you neither enfolding nor unfolding disjunctively or conjunctively. For disjunction and conjunction are alike the wall of coincidence, beyond which you exist absolute with respect to everything that can be said or thought."[50] This passage again seems to combine the coincidence of opposites with the fourfold structure. However, there are important distinctions between the two passages. First, the presence of the fourfold structure is indicated not as previously by the specification of the terms themselves – absolute, contracted, etc. – but now by the specification of the relations between them – conjunction, disjunction. Second, the reference to God as within the wall of paradise shows either that God has become a separate term beyond coincidence *b* or that God has become a separate term beyond both coincidence *a* and coincidence *b*.[51]

4 The theory of maxima

[**91]** As we have seen, there are four aspects of the *ratio Anselmi* which form the starting-points of Nicholas' innovations. These are the specification of the two definitions as the affirmative and negative sides of a single relation, the reduction of the emphasis upon demonstration, the specification of the two definitions as a distinction between kinds of maxima, and the replacement of the contextualization in dialectic with a contextualization in geometry. We should turn now to the distinction between kinds of maxima. Given that the theme of the maximum

49 *DVD* 9 (h VI, 35. 5–13) *tu, domine . . . cum omnibus, quae moventur, moveris et cum stantibus stas. Et quia reperiuntur, qui aliis stantibus moventur, tunc tu, domine, stas simul et moveris. . . . Nec tamen moveris nec quiescis, quia es superexaltatus et absolutus ab omnibus illis quae concipi aut nominari possunt*.

50 *DVD* 11 (h VI, 46. 6–11) *Et quando video te deum in paradiso, quem hlc murus coincidentiae oppositorum cingit, video te nec complicare nec explicare disiunctive vel copulative. Disiunctio enim pariter et coniunctio est murus coincidentiae, ultra quem exsistis absolutus ab omni eo, quod aut dici aut cogitari potest*.

51 Another passage relevant in this context is *DVD* 16 (h VI, 68. 7–12) where Nicholas connects the coincidence of opposites implicit in our incomprehensible comprehension of God with an 'intellectual desire' (*desiderium intellectuale*). The latter is directed towards that than which nothing is able to be more desirable – which obviously represents a more 'affective' version of the definition of God.

dominates the treatise *De Docta Ignorantia* to such an extent that it grounds the distinction between the work's three books, it is obviously better to refer the reader to some of the earlier published treatments than to attempt a full analysis here. However, it may be useful to summarize the argument of book I as it develops in counterpoint with the *ratio Anselmi*.

In chapter two, the maximum is identified with a simplified version of the first definition of God: namely, that than which a greater cannot be. The maximum is also said to coincide with the minimum because it admits of no opposition.[52] Moreover, the maximum is subdivided into absolute, contracted, and simultaneously absolute and contracted maxima. Chapter three elaborates the distinction between the 'simple maximum' (*maximum simpliciter*) which cannot enter into a relation of more and less and an ordinary maximum which does enter into such a relation.[53] In chapter four, Nicholas associates the maximum with the coincidence of opposites in several ways. First, the coincidence between the two definitions of God and the coincidence between the transcendence and immanence of God are understood as relations between two maxima[54] and secondly, the maximum is said to coincide with the minimum because that which is everything that it is able to **[92]** be can be neither more than itself nor less than itself. Chapter five develops the association of the maximum with the 'infinite,' while chapter six develops the association of the maximum with the 'absolute.'[55] The theme of the maximum reappears in chapter sixteen where Nicholas explains that possibility and actuality coincide in the maximum. After repeating his arguments that the maximum coincides with the minimum because it admits of no opposition and that the coincidence between the transcendence and immanence of God is a relation between two maxima, Nicholas also explains that the maximum which coincides with the minimum is the supreme measure of all things falling between a maximum and a minimum. Chapters seventeen and eighteen further develop the argument concerning the measure of all things by associating the maximum with the primary exemplar of Platonic philosophy. Finally, the theme of maximum reappears in chapter twenty-four where Nicholas explains that the 'name of the maximum' (*nomen maximi*) is the 'maximal name' (*nomen maximum*). This name is the biblical Tetragrammaton.

Nicholas' discussion of the maximum in *De Docta Ignorantia* shows the relation between this concept and the privileged terms of absolute and infinite and also between this concept and the coincidence of opposites. His references to the maximum in certain later texts show the relation between this concept and the coincidence of opposites and also the relation between this concept and the disjunction.[56]

52 On absence of opposition see p. 84.

53 What Nicholas calls the 'simple' maximum corresponds to the absolute maximum. This maximum is the one studied in book I. What we call the 'ordinary' maximum (to which Nicholas assigns no name here) corresponds to the contracted maximum. This is the maximum is studied in book II.

54 This passage was discussed in the previous section.

55 On these terms, see pp. 85–86.

56 Some of these later arguments are anticipated in *DC* I.10 (h III, 50. 1–15) and *DC* I. 11 (58. 1–60. 6).

In *De Beryllo*, Nicholas develops an analogy between a beryl stone which corrects the deficiencies of physical vision by having simultaneously a form of convex and concave and an intellectual beryl which corrects the deficiencies of intellectual vision by having simultaneously a form of maximum and minimum.[57] The process of correction – which involves the straightening of the refracted line of vision whereby we perceive the world in its difference and multiplicity by means of a coincidence of opposites – is described as follows: "Let us apply the beryl to mental eyes, and let us see through the maximum than which nothing can be greater and likewise through the minimum through **[93]** which nothing can be less. And we see the principle which is before everything great and small – completely simple with respect to every mode of division – and through which everything great and small is divisible."[58] In this text, what we have termed the disjunction corresponds to the difference between the straight line and the refracted line in the angle of vision, the emphasis being placed on the reducibility of the disjunction.

De Venatione Sapientiae summarizes many of Nicholas' ideas about the maximum, the coincidence of opposites, and the disjunction in a passage where the notion of continuum plays an important role. Here, Nicholas contrasts an 'actualized-possibility' – which corresponds to what was earlier called the absolute maximum and is similarly associated with the coincidence of opposites – with a 'possibility-of-being-made' – which corresponds with or overlaps with what was previously called the contracted maximum, associating the former with the second definition of God. Regarding the actualized-possibility he writes: "For it is not possible for anything to be seen rationally which that actualized-possibility lacks, since the latter is actually and most perfectly everything comprehensible and everything that exceeds all comprehension – blessed Anselm truly asserting that God is that which is greater than can be conceived."[59] A few lines below, Nicholas describes the relation between the actualized-possibility and the possibility of being made – which are now identified with simple and actual maximum respectively and also with causing and causable respectively – by stressing in the former case the disjunction between the two terms and in the latter case the continuum. "This is the basis of the principle of learned ignorance: namely, that with respect to things admitting more and less one never reaches a simple maximum or a simple minimum, even though one can reach an actual maximum and minimum . . . the causable is not the causing power, but rather the **[94]** cause is potentially in the causable. The causable never becomes the causing, but rather the causing power

57 *DB* (h XI/1, 3. 1–5).

58 *DB* (h XI/1, 8. 5–9) *Applicemus beryllum mentalibus oculis et videamus per maximum quo nihil maius esse potest, pariter et minimum, quo nihil minus esse potest, et videmus principium ante omne magnum et parvum, penitus simplex et indivisibile omni modo divisionis, quo quaecumque magna et parva sunt divisibilia*.

59 *DVS* 26 (h XII, 77. 2–6) *Non enim potest quicquam rationabiliter videri, quo ipsum possest careat, cum omnia comprehensibilia et omnem comprehensionem excedentia perfectissime actu existat, beato Anselmo veraciter asserente Deum esse maius quam concipi possit*.

turns into actuality at the limit of the causable."[60] In the course of his discussion, Nicholas explains the relations between the creator and the creatable, the active intellect and the intelligible, and fire and heat in terms of the disjunction and the continuum.

Interlude: the question of sources

In order to understand more clearly what we have termed the 'Rewriting of the *Proslogion*,' we should at this point insert a few remarks about Nicholas' philosophical sources. Now it is impossible to determine whether it was the reading of certain sources which inspired the Nicholas' innovations in doctrine or Nicholas' innovations in doctrine which encouraged his reading of those sources, given the extent to which the hermeneutics and the metaphysics of pre-modern philosophers and especially the hermeneutics and the metaphysics of Nicholas of Cusa are implicated in one another. Nevertheless, it is illuminating to make a methodological detour into sources provided that this necessary qualification is prefixed. Indeed, the essential philosophical distinction between Anselm and Nicholas will perhaps be brought into a sharper focus in this way.

One of the most important sources used by Nicholas but not by Anselm is Thierry of Chartres.[61] Nicholas appears not to know this author by name, although the combination of lavish praise for an anonymous commentator on Boethius' theological writings in the *Apologia Doctae Ignorantiae*[62] and the repeated occurrence of Thierry's very distinctive teachings in Nicholas' other works makes the debt unmistakable. In *De Docta Ignorantia*, Nicholas quotes the distinction between absolute necessity, determinate necessity, determinate possibility, and **[95]** absolute possibility established by Thierry[63] and, although reducing the four terms to three by identifying absolute necessity and absolute possibility, articulates a fourfold structure of the logical form A/non-B, A/B, non-A/B, non-A/non-B within a discussion of the contracted maximum.[64] Another source peculiar to Nicholas is Dionysius the Areopagite.[65] One could argue that this Christian Platonic writer – whom almost

60 *DVS* 26 (h XII, 79. 1–10) *Haec est ratio regulae doctae ignorantiae, quod in recipientibus magis et minus numquam devenitur ad maximum simpliciter vel minimum simpliciter, licet bene ad actum maximum et minimum . . . non est factibilitas potentia faciens, sed in ipsa factibilitate faciens est in potentia. Factibile enim numquam fit faciens, sed potentia faciens in termino factibilitatis in actum pervenit*.

61 Chronology obviously plays a role here, since Thierry of Chartres was active in the second and third decades of the twelfth century, i.e. one generation after Anselm.

62 *Apologia Doctae Ignorantiae* (h II, 24. 5–7).

63 Thierry (and Nicholas) speak of 'necessity of involvement' (*necessitas complexionis*) rather than determinate necessity, following the terminology of Boethius' *De Consolatione Philosophiae* which was the original source of the doctrine.

64 *DDI* II. 7–10 (h I). On Nicholas' use of Thierry of Chartres see Thomas P. McTighe, "The Meaning of the Couple 'Complicatio-Explicatio' in the Philosophy of Nicholas of Cusa," *Proceedings of the American Catholiuc Philosophical Association* 32 (1958), pp. 206–214.

65 Although Anselm could have known Dionysius, he seems to have preferred the less obviously apophatic writers Augustine and Boethius.

everyone before Lorenzo Valla assumed to have composed his treatises during the apostolic period – played a more fundamental role in determining the direction of Nicholas' own philosophical speculation than did any other. It was from Dionysius that the idea of a polysemous negation representing *a* differentiation (non-being meaning 'other than being') and *b* superiority (non-being meaning 'above being') and again *b1* intensification (above being meaning 'increased being') and *b2* transcendence (above being meaning 'surpassing being') was learned. Given that the negative represents a comparison of more or less in the second, third, and fourth senses, but enters into a strict binary opposition with the affirmative in the first sense, negation as such becomes a symbol of the inseparability between the metaphysical ideas of continuum and disjunction.[66] Another important source used by Nicholas but not by Anselm is Proclus.[67] This pagan Platonist is cited frequently by name in Nicholas' later writings, one of the interlocutors in his dialogue *De Non Aliud*[68] being the translator into Latin of Proclus' *Theologia Platonis* and the speaker assigned the task of expounding at length the doctrine contained there. In *De Principio*, Nicholas notes the distinction between participating, participated, and unparticipated principles established by Proclus and, by expanding the three terms to four by combining and separating the participating **[96]** and participated terms, articulates a fourfold structure of the logical form A/non-B, A/B, non-A/B, non-A/non-B within a discussion of the divine names.[69] If the Dionysian idea of polysemous negation is applied to this scheme in such a manner that the un-participated term can be construed as the 'intensely participated' term, one can perhaps at last see clearly how Nicholas conceives the strange relation of identity-difference between absolute and actual maxima.

These authors representing direct sources of specific passages and arguments in Nicholas of Cusa's writings might be contrasted with certain other authors who probably constitute indirect sources. Moreover, given the importance of the fourfold structure of the logical form A/non-B, A/B, non-A/B, non-A/non-B, two authors who exploit this scheme extensively might be singled out here for special mention. The first of these probable indirect sources is Eriugena who introduced the fourfold structure in order to "divide" nature into creating and not created, creating and created, not creating and created, and neither creating nor created, and then employed this division as the structural basis of his treatise *Periphyseon*.

66 On Nicholas' use of Dionysius, see the chapter "Die Präferenz für Ps.-Dionysius bei Nikolaus von Kues und seinem italienischen Umfeld," in *Ludus sapientiae. Studien zum Werk und zur Wirkungsgeschichte des Nikolaus von Kues*, ed. Hans Gerhard Senger (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

67 Since works of Proclus were first translated into Latin in the late thirteenth century, they were not available to Anselm.

68 *De Non Aliud* 1 (h XIII, 3. 1–9).

69 *De Principio* (h X/2b, 36. 1–17). On Nicholas' use of Proclus see Werner Beierwaltes, "Centrum Tocius Vite. Zur Bedeutung von Proklos' *Theologia Platonis* im Denken des Cusanus," in *Proclus et la Théologie Platonicienne. Actes du Colloque International de Louvain (13–16 mai 1998) en l'honneur de H.-D. Saffrey et L.G. Westerink*, eds. A.-P. Segonds and C. Steel (Leuven-Paris: Leuven University Press-Les Belles Lettres, 2000), pp. 629–651.

Nicholas' familiarity with this writer is proven by his explicit references in *Apologia Doctae Ignorantiae* to the author alone under the name *Iohannes Scotigena*[70] and to the author and his work with the words *Iohannis Scotigenae Peri Physeos*.[71] That Nicholas had actually studied at least part of Eriugena's work with care is shown by the existence of a set of marginal glosses to *Periphyeon*, book *I* written in his own hand in the MS *London, Brit. Libr., Addit. 11035* (tenth century).[72] These glosses draw attention to specific ideas in Eriugena's treatise in the areas of theology and logic such as the unknowability of God, the application of contraries to God, and the *quasi*-identity between God and creation, and occasionally develop these ideas further: for instance, by recasting Eriugena's account of emanative procession in terms of "contraction" (*contractio*). The second probable indirect source of Nicholas' thought is Honorius Augustodunensis who paraphrased and excerpted Eriugena's treatise **[97]** in order to produce a new work entitled *Clavis Physicae*. Nicholas' familiarity with the work if not with its writer is proven by his explicit reference again in *Apologia Doctae Ignorantiae* to something called the *Clavis Physicae Theodori*.[73] The existence of a set of marginal glosses to this *Clavis Physicae* written in his own hand in the MS *Paris, Bibl. Nat. lat. 6734* (twelfth century) shows that Nicholas had studied this Eriugenian paraphrase also with care.[74] These glosses draw attention to specific ideas in Honorius' treatise mainly in the area of Christian anthropology such as the nature of the resurrection body and the plenitude of humanity in Adam. Now in actual fact, Nicholas does not draw specific attention to the use of the fourfold structure in either Eriugena's treatise or Honorius' re-working of the latter. However, this is probably because he saw the dialectical methodology that it implied as absolutely fundamental or even self-evident, and his frequent habit in glossing these and other texts is to pass over in silence points that have been rehearsed time and time again in his own writings.

Nicholas' subjective theory

Returning to the distinction made earlier between the objective and ontological and the subjective and epistemological aspects, we should now follow the second of these two trajectories in Nicholas' thought with the help of his dialogue *Idiota de Mente*. Once again, we may perhaps distinguish the three philosophical ideas which the fifteenth-century writer shares with his predecessors in the Neoplatonic tradition: the oppositional structure with a privileged term, the continuum, and the combination

70 *ADI* 30 (h II. 21. 2).

71 *ADI* 43 (h II, 29. 17–30. 1).

72 See Institut für Cusanusforschung, Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald Verlag, "Kritisches Verzeichnis der Londoner Handschriften aus dem Besitz des Nikolaus von Kues," in *Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft* 3 (1963), pp. 16–100 (with the actual text of the *marginalia* on pp. 86–100 of this publication).

73 *ADI* 43 (h II, 29. 17).

74 See *Honorius Augustodunensis. Clavis Physicae,* a cura di Paolo Lucentini, Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura 1974, p. xii and plate iv.

of the continuum with a disjunction; and the three ideas constituting innovations on the later writer's part: the new privileged terms, the continuum as coincidence of opposites or as fourfold structure, and the widening of the disjunction.[75]

1.1 The oppositional structure with a privileged term

[98] For Nicholas of Cusa and his Neoplatonic sources, reality in the subjective[76] sense also consists of a series of oppositions each containing a superior (+) and an inferior (−) term, the most important of these oppositions again being unity (+) and multiplicity (−), sameness (+) and otherness (−), rest (+) and motion (−), and eternity (+) and time (−). This structure emerges clearly in *Idiota de Mente* where Nicholas compares the enfolding and unfolding of the divine mind with the enfolding and unfolding of the human mind, what is enfolded or unfolded in these divine and human processes of thinking being the series of oppositions listed above.[77] The epistemological theory is complicated by Nicholas' arguments that the human mind is strictly an image rather than an unfolding of the divine mind, that the divine mind has a formative whereas the human mind has a conformative activity, and that the divine mind enfolds things that themselves enfold. It should also be noted that the enfolding and unfolding of both the divine and the human minds take place both with respect to 'concepts' (*notiones*) and with respect to 'words' (*nomina*).[78]

1.2 The continuum

The process of divine thinking that unfolds concepts and words and the process of human thinking that on the one hand conforms to this thinking and on the other forms its own thinking represent not so much the establishment of a discrete network of ideas as the discrete marking of a continuum. The unity of this continuum is indicated from the side of the creature by his discussion of the 'assimilative power' (*vis assimilativa*) which permits the human mind as unity to become every kind of multiplicity. Thus, the human mind from being the unity of the point can assimilate itself to the line and from being the unity of the now can assimilate itself to time.[79]

2.1 The new privileged terms

[99] The oppositions of absolute (+) and contracted (−) and of infinite (+) and finite (−) that are emphasized more by Nicholas than by earlier Neoplatonists also play a significant role in the epistemological context. In *Idiota de Mente*,

75 In what follows, we will not study all the categories applicable within the "objective" theory also within its "subjective" counterpart, since this task has already been accomplished in part during the earlier discussions.

76 For the objective theory, see p. 83.

77 *Idiota de Mente* 4 (h V^2, 74. 12–25).

78 See *IDM* 4 (h V^2, 74. 1–79. 10) for concepts and *IDM* 2 (h V^2, 58. 1–68. 16) for words.

79 *IDM* 4 (h V^2, 75. 1–12). Cf. *IDM* 3 (h V^2, 72. 1–14).

the human mind is said to be able to achieve as a highest level of contemplation the 'intuition of absolute truth' (*intuitio veritatis absolutae*) where everything is seen without multiplicity or difference,[80] and similarly the human mind is said to 'elevate itself to infinity' (*se ad infinitatem elevare*) when it sees that all the exemplars or Forms of things are one.[81] It should be noted that the human mind – which is a contracted and finite being – does not become identified with the absolute or the infinite itself in these moments of contemplation.

2.2 The widening of the disjunction

The argument that the sphere of the creature is dominated by proportion whereas there is no proportion between the creature and God – together with the widening of the disjunction in the continuum of causal connection resulting from this argument – is the basis of some of the most far-reaching developments in Nicholas' epistemology. It is at this point that the famous theory of 'conjectures' (*coniecturae*) to which Nicholas devoted an entire treatise comes into play,[82] for a conjecture basically amounts to a special kind of thought, argument, or theory which is produced in relation to the combination of a **[100]** continuum with a disjunction. In a passage of *Idiota de Mente*, Nicholas' explanation of the human mind's introduction of number and proportion into things as it attempts to grasp the infinity of the extra-mental reality together with his insistence that extra-mental reality does have multiplicity from the divine mind provides us with an example of a conjecture.[83] In another passage, his provisional endorsement of the Peripatetic position that nothing can arise in the intellect which was not previously in reason or in sense together with his combination of Platonic and Peripatetic tenets in postulating simultaneously a universal through which particulars exist and a universal derived from particulars provides us with another example of a conjecture.[84] The thesis that there is no proportion between the creature and God is illustrated by a striking analogy between the Layman's physical activity of carving spoons and his intellectual activity of making conjectures. The Layman works not by imitating the

80 *IDM* 7 (h V^2, 105. 12–106. 1).

81 *IDM* 2 (h V^2, 67. 2–3) and *IDM* 3 (h V^2, 73. 1–6).

82 *De Coniecturis* (h III). The doctrine of conjecture stated in this work is extremely complicated, and we can only summarize those aspects relevant to the present topic here. Nicholas defines conjecture as 'a positive assertion participating with otherness in truth as it is' (*positiva assertio in alteritate veritatem, uti est, participans*) (*DC* I. 11 (h III, 57. 10–11)). Two aspects of conjecture are particularly important: *1*. Conjecture is a positive assertion. The combination of continuum and disjunction is a combination of positive and negative. In a sense, conjecture treats this combination with emphasis on the affirmative side, and learned ignorance the combination with emphasis on the negative side. *2*. Conjecture is opposed to 'precision' (*praecisio*). This term seems to have *1* an absolute sense as *a* the situation where there is no longer a combination of continuum and disjunction, or *b* the fact that there is a combination of continuum and disjunction; and *2*. a relative sense as the correction of a conjecture (see *DC* I. 10 (h III, 52. 1–13) and *DC* I. 11 (h III, 54. 1–57. 17)).

83 *IDM* 6 (h V^2, 93. 1–6).

84 *IDM* 2 (h V^2, 65. 1–66. 20) and *IDM* 4 (h V^2, 77. 5–79. 10).

forms of created things – as does a painter – but by molding his material until the proportion underlying the form appears.[85] We might paraphrase this by saying that the painter is an artisan who takes no account of the combination of continuum and disjunction – since he assumes the fixity of his object – whereas the Layman is one who accepts and exploits this combination in his work.

3 The reduction of the process of demonstration

The subjective or epistemological theory derived from Neoplatonism and especially the innovations introduced into that theory by Nicholas himself provide the framework within which the *ratio Anselmi* can be given a new interpretation. In particular, a reduction of the emphasis upon the process of demonstration with respect to the two definitions of God is a consequence of certain developments within the context of that epistemology.

An argument in *Idiota de Sapientia* II is a good illustration. Here, the Orator poses the question of how one can conceive God who is **[101]** greater than can be conceived and, after several dialogic exchanges, the Layman answers by explaining that God may be approached in terms of the fourfold structure. The intervening exchanges are of great interest since the Layman argues as follows:

> Every question about God presupposes what the question is about. Therefore one must bring into the reply with regard to every question about God that which the question presupposes. For God is signified in the signification if all terms, although he is non-signifiable . . . If somebody were to ask you whether God exists, you must say what is presupposed: namely, that he exists because he is the existence that is presupposed in the question. Thus, if somebody were to ask you what God is, since this question presupposes that quiddity exists, you will reply that God is absolute quiddity itself. And so it applies in all cases.[86]

This passage is instructive in showing that the process of questioning and answering and presumably also the process of logical inference is less akin to the discovery of a new fact than to the revelation of something concealed and less akin to the sequence between temporal moment *A* and temporal moment *B* than to the transition from temporal moment *A* (or *B*) to complete timelessness.

85 *IDM* 2 (h V^2, 62. 8–14). On conjecture, see further *IDM* 5 (h V^2, 82. 1–17) and *IDM* 7 (h V^2, 102. 11–15).

86 *IDS* II (h V^2, 29. 18–30. 9) *Omnis quaestio de deo praesupponit quaesitum, et id est respondendum, quod in omni quaestione de deo quaestio praesupponit, nam deus in omni terminorum significatione significatur, licet sit insignificabilis . . . Cum ergo a te quaesitum fuerit, an sit deus, hoc quod praesupponitur dicito, scilicet eum esse, quia est entitas in quaestione praesupposita. Sic si quis quaesiverit quid est deus, cum haec quaestio praesupponit quiditatem esse, respondebis deum esse ipsam quiditatem absolutam. Ita quidem in omnibus*.

Several passages in *Idiota de Mente* explain what amounts to a non-discursive mode of thinking in more detail. At one point, the Layman explains the difference between confused reason and reason informed by mind using an analogy between an uneducated man and a trained scholar as follows: "Thus, reason makes syllogisms and does not know what it is making syllogisms about without mind. But mind informs, illuminates, and perfects reasoning so that it might know what it makes syllogisms about . . . as though an uneducated man were to read some book without knowing the meaning of the words . . . while there is another man who reads, knows, and understands **[102]** what he is reading."[87] Strictly speaking, Nicholas' analogy between psychic faculties and types of reader deals not with reason and mind but with reason and the relation between reason and mind, and therefore not with the temporal and the non-temporal spheres but with the temporal separated from and connected with the non-temporal sphere respectively. Nevertheless, that Nicholas sees the discursive and temporal processes of cognition as derived from a non-discursive and non-temporal activity of some kind is shown by his reference elsewhere to the mind's assimilative power by which as unity it assimilates itself to multiplicity and as now or present it assimilates itself to all time.[88]

Another discussion in *Idiota de Mente* contextualizes the above in terms of the fourfold structure and the coincidence of opposites. At one point, Nicholas summarizes the theory which he has been developing through many dialogic exchanges to the effect that the mind in the sense of measure conforms itself to four modes of being. "It conforms itself to possibility, so that it might measure all things in a possible way. It conforms itself to absolute necessity so that it might measure all things in a unitary and simple way, as in the case of God. It conforms itself to necessity of involvement so that it might measure all things in their proper being. It conforms itself to determinate possibility so that it might measure all things as they exist."[89] What Nicholas understands by the second and third conformations is of particular relevance to our question of discursive and non-discursive thinking. Regarding the third conformation, he has argued that the mind employs itself as an instrument and considers its own immutability. It assimilates itself to forms which it has abstracted from matter, making conjectures with respect to mathematical objects. It here sees "that one thing is thus, another thing is thus, and everything is composed of its own **[103]** parts . . . that this mode of being is not truth itself but a participation in truth whereby one thing is truly in this way and

87 *IDM* 5 (h V^2, 84. 4–10). *sic ratio syllogizat et nescit quid syllogizet sine mente, sed mens informat, dilucidat et perficit ratiocinationem, ut sciat quid syllogizat. Ac si idiota vim vocabulorum ignorans librum aliquem legat . . . Et sit alius, qui legat et sciat et intelligat id quod legit*.

88 *IDM* 4 (h V^2, 75. 1–12).

89 *IDM* 9 (h V^2, 125. 4–8) *Conformat enim se possiblitati, ut omnia possibiliter mensurat; sic necessitate absolutae, ut omnia unice et simpliciter ut deus mensuret; sic necessitate complexionis, ut omnia in proprio esse mensuret; atque possibilitati determinatae, ut omnia, quemadmodum exsistunt, mensuret*.

another thing truly in another way."[90] Regarding the second conformation, he has argued that the mind employs itself as an instrument and considers its own simplicity which it is incommunicable with matter. It assimilates itself to all things, producing speculations with respect to theological matters. It here "contemplates all things without any composition of parts, and not as though one thing is this and another thing as that, but as though all things are one and one thing is all."[91] Given the fluid manner in which Nicholas makes his conjectures, it is not clear whether the third conformation corresponds to the reason operating alone or the reason operating in relation to mind in the earlier passage, and whether the second conformation corresponds to the earlier passage's mind operating in relation to reason or mind operating alone. Nevertheless, there seems little doubt that the third conformation deals with the distinction and the second confirmation with the coincidence of opposites.

4 The geometrical context

As we have seen, there are four aspects of the *ratio Anselmi* that form the starting-points of Nicholas' innovations. These are: the specification of the two definitions as the affirmative and negative sides of a single relation, the reduction of the emphasis upon the process of demonstration, the specification of the two definitions as a distinction between kinds of maxima, and the replacement of the contextualization in dialectic with a contextualization in geometry. We should now turn to the contextualization in geometry. Nicholas' preoccupation with mathematics in general and geometry in particular is displayed throughout his philosophical career in writings from *De Docta Ignorantia* until *De Apice Theoriae*, and in this final section we shall simply note the most striking example of the geometrical contextualization of **[104]**Anselm's argument and add a few comments on the methodological principles underlying this contextualization.[92]

The argument in *De Beryllo* where Nicholas develops the analogy between the beryl stone which corrects the deficiencies of physical vision and the intellectual beryl which corrects the deficiencies of intellectual vision introduces various geometrical ideas associated with the trajectory of vision. Having earlier noted the analogy between the coincidence of opposites represented by the convex and concave surfaces of the lens in the physical sphere and the coincidence of opposites

90 *IDM* 7 (h V^2, 105. 3–6) *prout una est sic, alia sic, et quaelibet ex suis partibus composita . . . quod hic modus essendi non est ipsa veritas, sed participatio veritatis, ut unum sic sit vere et aliud aliter vere*. . . .

91 *IDM* 7 (h V^2, 105. 13–14) *omnia intuetur absque omni compositione partium et non ut unum est hoc et aliud illud, sed ut omnia unum et unum omnia*.

92 Although Nicholas in the passages to be considered below places the emphasis on geometry, in other passages he places the emphasis on arithmetic. As illustrations of these two contrasting approaches, one might cite *DDI* I (h I) and *DC* I (h III) respectively.

represented by that which cannot be greater and that which cannot be less in the intellectual sphere, he writes

> Therefore, when you see through the beryl the angle which is likewise the greatest and the least that can be formed, your sight will not be limited by any angle but by the single line which is the principle of the angles. This is the principle of the angles on the surface, indivisible with respect to every mode of division by which the angles are divisible. Thus, in the same manner that you see this, so may you see the absolute first principle through the mirror in an enigma.[93]

The geometrical character of the thought-experiment summarized in this passage is reinforced by the immediately preceding instructions to draw various diagrams. Thus, the principle of the angles constituting the corrected line of intellectual vision towards the unitary first principle is to be depicted by the straight line AB with mid-point C, while the various angles constituting the refracted lines of intellectual vision towards the world of multiplicity are to be depicted by the movement of the line CB with respect to the line CA at point C. Linking the coincidence of opposites with the *ratio Anselmi* once again, Nicholas notes that the straight line is equivalent to an acute angle than which **[105]** no angle can be more acute and to an obtuse angle than which no angle can be more obtuse.

A passage in *Idiota de Mente* explains how Nicholas understands explicitly the relation between geometry and the cognitive process and – because of a certain relation between magnitude and definition – implicitly the relation between geometry and the *ratio Anselmi*. Here, the Layman responds to a request to explain Boethius' statement that the comprehension of the truth of things is in multitude and magnitude by saying that the ancient philosopher was calling attention to the interrelated cognitive processes of separating one thing from another and grasping the wholeness of a thing. At this point it seems that the Layman is more interested in the wholeness which corresponds to magnitude than with the separation corresponding to multitude,[94] since he immediately goes on to argue that the wholeness of something is attained only by separating it from other things, that wholeness is where something is neither greater nor less than itself, that wholeness is especially studied in geometry and astronomy, and that the wholeness of something is attained by the process of measuring. At a further prompting from the Philosopher, the Layman draws the striking conclusion that nothing will be known unless everything is known on the grounds that individual things represent parts with respect to the whole represented by the universe, the simultaneously microcosmic

93 *DB* (h XI/1, 9. 8–14) *Quando igitur tu vides per beryllum maximum pariter et minimum formabilem angulum, visus non terminabitur in angulo aliquo, sed in simplici linea, quae est principium angulorum, quae est indivisibile principium superficialium angulorum omni modo divisionis, quo anguli sunt divisibiles. Sicuti igitur hoc vides, ita per speculum in aenigmate videas absolutum primum principium*.

94 In other words, he wishes to exploit the geometrical rather than the arithmetical analogy. See n. 92.

and macrocosmic relation between parts and whole being illustrated on the one hand by the spoon which is being carved by the Layman and the universe which is created by God. After explaining a further statement of Boethius about the necessity of studying the *quadrivium* because of its special concern with such matters, the Layman concludes by summarizing the connection between the mathematical notions under discussion and the structure of dialectic:[95]

> Everything that exists falls under magnitude and multitude, since the demonstration of all things takes place through the power of the one or the other. Magnitude limits and multitude separates. **[106]** Therefore, definition which limits and includes the whole being has the power of magnitude and relates itself to it, while the demonstration of definitions takes place necessarily according to the power of magnitude. On the other hand, division and the demonstration of division take place according to the power of multitude. Moreover, syllogistic demonstrations arise according to the power of magnitude and multitude. That a third proposition follows as a conclusion from two propositions is a matter of multitude. That the conclusion is drawn from universal and particular propositions is a matter of magnitude.[96]

Now the fifteenth-century writer does not explicitly argue from the relation between geometry and magnitude to the relation between geometry and the *ratio Anselmi* by means of the relation established by the above passage between magnitude and definition. Nevertheless, it would be implausible to argue that he did not at least subconsciously assume that Anselm's argument involves the idea of definition, that this argument deals with the idea of magnitude, and that definition involves the idea of magnitude. For Nicholas of Cusa therefore, the celebrated *ratio Anselmi* becomes in the last analysis a self-reflecting structure exploiting the ambivalently geometrical and logical nature of magnitude.

Conclusion

Given the extent to which Nicholas of Cusa has transformed Anselm of Canterbury's proof of the existence of God, one might conclude that the title of the present essay 'Rewriting the *Proslogion*' has turned out to be something of an

95 The emphasis is upon connection rather than identity. Nicholas prefaces the passage about to be quoted with a remark that the logical elements described are not themselves multitudes or magnitudes but "fall under" the latter.

96 *IDM* 10 (h V^2, 128. 3–12) . . . *omne, quod est, cadit sub magnitudine vel multitudine, quoniam demonstratio omnium rerum fit vel secundum vim unius vel alterius. Magnitudo terminat, multitudo discernit. Unde diffinitio, quae totum esse terminat et includit, vim habet magnitudinis et ad eam pertinet, et diffinitionum demonstratio fit necessario secundum vim magnitudinis, divisio vero et divisionum demonstratio secundum vim multitudinis. Fiunt etiam syllogismorum demonstrationes secundum vim magnitudinis et multitudinis. Quod enim ex duabus tertia comcluditur, multitudinis est; quod autem ex universalibus et particularibus, magnitudinis est*.

understatement. Clearly, the last medieval Platonist has not been content to repeat or paraphrase his predecessor's celebrated argument, but has rather transmuted it into doctrines **[107]** which sometimes modify and occasionally contradict the expressed intention of the original author. Yet at a deeper level of reflection there should be no doubt that Nicholas of Cusa remains in harmony with Anselm of Canterbury. As we noted at the beginning of this essay, the argument of Anselm's *Proslogion* was designed not to prove one important philosophical truth but to form the logical presupposition of a number of interrelated doctrines. As we have discovered in the subsequent analysis, the recollection of this argument in Nicholas' writings between *De Docta Ignorantia* and *De Venatione Sapientiae* serves as the thematic nucleus of ideas about objectivity and subjectivity, about opposition, continuum, and disjunction, and about many other things. There is undoubtedly an important methodological difference between forming a logical presupposition of various doctrines and forming a thematic nucleus of different 'conjectures.' Nevertheless, the aspiration towards a systematic unity itself – which can only result from the intimate relation between the *ratio Anselmi* and the divine image in the human mind – allows no room for disagreement between the two philosophers.

12

NICHOLAS OF CUSA AS SUMMATION AND SINGULARITY

[15] As is frequently the case with the greatest figures in the history of philosophy, Nicholas of Cusa can be seen as both the culmination of an earlier tradition and the initiator of new tendencies. This paper will be devoted to considering certain aspects of the fifteenth-century thinker's relation to the earlier tradition not only because the most philosophically sophisticated if not the most historically accurate readings of Cusanus contained in Ernst Cassirer's famous monograph *Individuum und Kosmos* had the opposite orientation,[1] but also because Cusanus can be seen as the last representative of Platonic theology before its definitive reformulation in exegetical if not metaphysical terms by Marsilio Ficino.

We shall consider Cusanus' historical position as a Platonist and the medieval Platonic tradition which he represents from two viewpoints.[2] The first angle of consideration will be labeled *Cusanus as Summation*. Here, various **[16]** philosophical themes important in the evolution of medieval Platonism can be understood as reflected in the work of the German philosopher. These can be grouped for expository purposes in accordance with their textual provenance from Thierry of Chartres, the Platonic *Letters*, Plato's *Parmenides*, Dionysius the Areopagite,

1 E. Cassirer, *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy*, trans. M. Domandi (New York, 1963, repr. Mineola, NY, 2000). The German original of this historical study by a major philosopher is: *Individuum und Kosmos in der Philosophie der Renaissance* (Leipzig-Berlin, 1927, 5th ed., Darmstadt, 1977).

2 The abundant literature on Nicholas of Cusa has often in practice (although usually not in theory) minimized his relation to the earlier Platonic tradition. This is probably because the character, extent, and significance of the medieval Platonic tradition have themselves often been the objects of misunderstanding. The studies of Werner Beierwaltes (see notes 45, 62) are absolutely fundamental for understanding Cusanus' historical-philosophical position, although they are mostly directed to the explanation of specific questions. G. Santinello, *Il neoplatonismo di Nicolò Cusano*, in *Il Neoplatonismo nel Rinascimento*, ed. P. Prini (Roma, 1993), pp. 103–115 is a useful survey. On Cusanus and the Neoplatonism of his era see E. Garin, *Cusano e i platonici italiani del Quattrocento*, in *Nicolò da Cusa. Relazioni tenute al Convegno interuniversitario di Bressanone nel 1960* (Firenze, 1962), pp. 75–96 and M. de Gandillac, *Neoplatonism and Christian Thought in the Fifteenth Century (Nicholas of Cusa and Marsilio Ficino)*, in *Neoplatonism and Christian Thought*, ed. D. J. O'Meara (Albany, NY, 1982), pp. 143–168. On Cusanus' explicit citations of Platonists see M. L. Führer, *Cusanus Platonicus. References to the Term 'Platonici' in Nicholas of Cusa*, in *The Platonic tradition in the Middle Ages. A Doxographic Approach*, eds. S. Gersh and M. J. F. M. Hoenen (Berlin-New York, 2002), pp. 345–370.

and Proclus. In counterpoint with these philosophical themes are secondary but not unimportant motifs derived in a more general way from Aristotelian thought, from medieval commentators on Aristotle, and from pre-Platonic thinkers quoted by Aristotle. The second angle of consideration will be labeled *Cusanus as Singularity*. Here, certain philosophical ideas found in the German philosopher's writings, which are unprecedented in the earlier tradition, albeit formulated in relation to problems arising in that tradition, will be noted more briefly.[3]

Consideration of Cusanus' historical position as a Platonist and of the medieval Platonic tradition which he represents demands sensitivity to the question of Cusanus as reader.[4] At this point, it is important to keep in mind that the German philosopher rarely operates in the medieval manner as a compiler of material from earlier sources and even less in the modern manner of attempting a detached historical analysis. In accordance with his own definition of the method of conjecture and his frequent recourse to analogies of optical lenses, Cusanus' approach to the reading of earlier documents might be characterized on the one hand as highly selective and on the other as radically distorting. From the first and perhaps also the second viewpoint, it is again possible to understand Cusanus as pursuing an approach different from that pursued by Ficino in the next generation.

Cusanus as summation[5]

The most overt indication of Nicholas of Cusa's dependence on the synthesis of Platonic doctrine which we associate with Thierry of Chartres and his **[17]** school occurs in the *Apologia Doctae Ignorantiae*.[6] Among the many sources cited by

3 This essay will be devoted to Cusanus and Platonism. But one should not forget that the Platonic sources of Cusanus' thought are not his only philosophical sources, even though they tend to impart a "Platonic" tinge to everything else. See below.

4 In other words, the question regarding the "hermeneutic" character of Cusanus' thought. A self-conscious preoccupation with hermeneutic questions affected all Cusanus' relations with philosophical predecessors and reaches a climax with the "enigma" of *Non Aliud*. Here, the hermeneutic *as such* almost replaces the ontological.

5 In this section our approach will be to move through texts to doctrines rather than through doctrines to texts. However, there are certain aspects of Cusanus' Platonism which, not being tied to the influence of specific Platonic texts but rather reflecting the general tendencies of medieval Platonism, will fall outside the present analysis. Of primary importance here is what one might term the "intellective tendency" of medieval Platonism. As a by-product of the Christianization of Platonism during the late ancient period, the emanative process of causation which grounds the hierarchical order of reality evolves from a process with an intellective culminating phase (as in Plotinus or Proclus) into a process with intellective initiating *and* culminating phases (as in Augustine or Dionysius). This evolution reaches its climax with thirteenth and fourteenth-century German Albertists such as Dietrich of Freiberg, Meister Eckhart, and Berthold of Moosburg who reinforce Platonic doctrines of Augustinian and Dionysian provenance with ideas derived from Proclus' *Elementatio Theologica* and Arabic Aristotelian commentaries. Cusanus obviously knew the Augustinian and Dionysian texts very well and would also have become familiar with the Albertist tradition through his Cologne teacher Heimeric de Campo.

6 The connection with Thierry of Chartres was first noted by P. Duhem, *Thierry de Chartres et Nicholas de Cues*, "Recherches des sciences philosophiques et théologiques", III, 1909, pp. 525–531.

Cusanus in his defense against the attacks of the neo-Scholastic Johannes Wenck is an unnamed commentator on Boethius' *De Trinitate* who is described as the most intelligent man of all those whom he has read.[7] Although the ensuing quotation cannot be traced to any known earlier text, the facts that Cusanus frequently exploits doctrines peculiar to the twelfth-century Platonist such as the arithmetical model of the intra-Trinitarian relation[8] and the fourfold classification of reality,[9] and that the same Platonist and his students were celebrated for their commentaries on the *Opuscula Theologica* of Boethius combine to produce a compelling circumstantial case for Cusanus' dependence on Thierry of Chartres for the elaboration of central doctrine.

The synthesis of Platonic doctrine which is associated with Thierry and recurs in virtually identical form in Cusanus may be broken down into the following textually based components. The lowest level of this doctrinal complex is supplied by Plato's *Timaeus* – in the Latin translation of Calcidius – and takes the form of an explanation of reality in terms of numbers and ratios and in terms of the analogy between macrocosm and microcosm.[10] Examples of these doctrines in Cusanus' writings are not difficult to find, although the third figure of *De Coniecturis* I with its depiction of a graded sequence of three worlds dominated by God, intellect, and reason respectively in terms **[18]** of circles of different diameters and of the numerical series 1, 2, 3, 4 and 1, 3, 9, 27 recalls the mathematical psychology of the *Timaeus*,[11] while the astronomical excursus in *De Docta ignorantia* II with its explicit linkage between the notion that everything is contained in everything else and Plato's understanding of the world as an animal recalls the cosmological analogy of the same dialogue.[12] Cusanus' important revision of traditional Platonism whereby the real multiplicity of transcendent exemplars is replaced by the multiplicity of cognitive relations to a single exemplar – apparently quoted from Plato's *Phaedo* through an erroneous recollection of Calcidius – also forms part of the lowest level of this doctrinal complex.[13]

Building on these authentically (or almost authentically) Platonic foundations, Thierry and Cusanus add a layer of doctrine derived from Boethius. The most

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For more recent general discussion see W. Beierwaltes, *Einheit und Gleichheit. Eine Fragestellung im Platonismus von Chartres und ihre Rezeption durch Nicolaus Cusanus*, in *Denken des Einen, Studien zur neuplatonischen Philosophie und ihrer Wirkungsgeschichte* (Frankfurt a. M., 1985), pp. 368–384. See also T. P. McTighe, *Thierry of Chartres and Nicholas of Cusa's Epistemology*, "Proceedings of the PMR Conference (Villanova University)," V, 1980, pp. 169–176.

7 *Apologia Doctae Ignorantiae* (h II, 24. 5–9).

8 See below.

9 See below.

10 It also takes the form of an elaboration of the doctrine of a self-moving soul. This topic is discussed most fully in *De Docta Ignorantia* II. 8–10 (h I, 84. 21–99. 12) and *De Ludo Globi* I (h IX, 22. 1–25. 19, 28. 1–29. 14, 40. 1–15).

11 *De Coniecturis* I. 13 (h III, 64. 1–69. 11).

12 *DDI* II. 12 (h I, 109. 16–22).

13 *DDI* I. 17 (h I, 33. 15–20). Cf. *Directio Speculantis seu De Non Aliud* 10 (h XIII, 22. 23–23.9) and 21 (h XIII, 51. 12–31).

interesting example in the Cusan corpus is perhaps the argument in *Idiota De Mente* that everything can be comprehended under the mathematical notions of multitude or magnitude in the sense that definition exhibits the power of magnitude, division the power of multitude, and syllogistic demonstration the powers of both magnitude and multitude.[14] Thierry and Cusanus also add a layer of doctrine derived from Macrobius, although this writer seems not to be cited by name. The Cusan corpus provides an example of this in the argument of *De Coniecturis* I that there are corresponding to God, intellect, soul, and body four levels of unity in which all things are God, all things are intellect, all things are soul, and all things are body.[15] Thierry of Chartres and his fifteenth-century admirer also add two ideas derived from the *Asclepius* attributed to Hermes Trismegistus to this doctrinal complex.[16] These are: first, the notion that God is transcendent in the sense that the name of no thing **[19]** can be assigned to him and also immanent in the sense that the names of all things can be assigned to him – interesting examples can be found in *De Docta Ignorantia, Idiota De Mente*, and *De Beryllo*[17] – ; and second, the notion that because humanity is the creator of conceptual beings and artificial forms just as the deity is the creator of real beings and natural forms, man can be called a second god – a striking example occurs in *De Beryllo*.[18]

The highest level of Thierry's and Cusanus' synthesis of Platonic doctrine consists of material which is less a development of selected doctrines in ancient texts than a largely twelfth-century development independent of such texts, although verbal echoes of antiquity do remain.[19] The most important of these is undoubtedly the theory of four modes of being: "absolute necessity" (*absoluta necessitas*) – God as Form of forms – ; "necessity of enfolding" (*necessitas complexionis*) – the Forms of things as ordered by the perceiving mind – ; "determinate possibility" (*possibilitas determinata*) – things achieving a particular actuality – ; and "absolute possibility" (*possibilitas absoluta*) – the possibility that particular things might arise. Cusanus presents this fourfold structure in both a relatively objective or ontological and a relatively subjective or epistemological form in accordance with Thierry's own practice,[20] and also develops a subtle argument original to himself

14 *Idiota De Mente* 10 (h V, 128. 1–15). Cusanus also depends on Boethius for such basic arithmetical ideas as the relation between the integers 1, 2, 3, 4 and the notions of odd and even. See *DLG* II (h IX, 106. 1–109. 29), etc.

15 *DC* I. 4 ff. (h III, 18. 1ff.) Another echo of Macrobius is the association of the concentric circles in the bowling-game analogy of the cosmos with psychological states. See *DLG* II (h IX, 104. 11–24).

16 From the methodological viewpoint, there are perhaps two striking features of "Hermes Trismegistus". First, Cusanus sometimes treats Hermes as the dominant authority in the synthesis of Platonism. probably because of his putative antiquity. Second, Cusanus attributes both the ancient text *Asclepius* and the medieval *Liber XXIV Philosophorum* to Hermes, thereby confusing the historical provenance.

17 See *DDI* I. 24 (h I, 48. 8–49.2), *IDM* 3 (h V, 69. 6–15), *De Beryllo* (h XI/1, 13. 1–12).

18 See *DB* (h XI/1, 7. 1–13).

19 The Hermetic *Liber XXIV Philosophorum* plays an important role in reinforcing this level of the Platonic synthesis. See *DDI* II. 2 (h I, 66. 7–14).

20 See *DDI* I. 22 (h I, 44. 1–45, 29) and II. 7–10 (h I, 81. 16–99. 12) (objective). See *IDM* 7 (h V, 100. 1–107. 14) (subjective). Cf. also *DNA* 10–13 (h XIII, 22. 23–29. 7) and 21 (h XIII. 50. 33–51. 31).

in which the first and fourth terms are identified in order to maintain the simultaneous actuality and possibility of the deity.[21] Closely associated with this is another doctrine shared by Cusanus and Thierry. In *De Docta Ignorantia* I Cusanus attributes to the Pythagoreans the teaching that the first principle is unity, equality of unity, and connection between equality and unity, and that this can be represented arithmetically by $1 \times 1 \times 1$: an obviously Trinitarian reading of ancient numerology which is uniquely characteristic of Thierry's commentaries.[22] That Cusanus continued to meditate on this mode of theological expression is suggested by his similar description of the first principle as the not other which is not other than the not other in the late dialogue *Directio Speculantis seuDe Non Aliud*.[23]

[20] The treatise *De Beryllo* (1458) clearly indicates an expansion in the writers' repertory of Platonic texts.[24] Near the beginning of this text, Cusanus notes that the topic of coincidence of opposites to be approached through the enigma of the beryl is one of those mystical matters which Plato in his letters forbids to be disclosed to those ignorant of intellectual elevations.[25] The continuation of the famous passage in Plato's *Epistula* II which is being quoted at this point is cited later in *De Beryllo* with respect to the same topic.[26] Here, Cusanus seems partly to be quoting *verbatim*:

> Thus, Plato says in his *Letters* that all things exist together with the King of all and all things exist for his sake, and that he is the cause of all good things. A little later, he says: 'The human mind desires to understand what sort of things these are. It observes those kinds of thing which are related to them but of which none exists in a self-sufficient manner. But in the King himself there is nothing of this sort'".[27]

Another reference by Cusanus in *De Beryllo* to the same passage is less verbally exact but easier to interpret. This shows that it is the doctrine that there is a gradation of three principles, and that each principle contains all things in its

21 *DDI* II. 8 (h I, 84. 21–89. 25).

22 *DDI* I. 8 (h I, 17. 1–22).

23 *DNA* 5 (h XIII, 12. 15–27).

24 Cusanus seems to have become familiar with various humanistic translations of Plato which became available during his life and especially with Leonardo Bruni's versions of the *Apologia, Crito,* and *Phaedo* copies of which he owned (see R. Klibansky's note to *ADI* 8. 8.) For important citations of the *Apologia* see *ADI* (h II, 8. 6–11 and 31. 10–12). However, the Plato passages in *De Beryllo* seem to have been derived through Proclus. See the comments of the editors H. G. Senger and K. Bormann in *Opera Omnia* XI 1, praef. xxix-xxxi. I*n* addition to the material from Plato to be discussed below, one should remember that Cusanus also has access to doxographic summaries of Plato and his followers' thought in various works of Aristotle and in Diogenes Laertius. Cusanus explicitly testifies to reading Diogenes in *De Venatione Sapientiae* (h XII, prol. 1–23).

25 *DB* (h XI/1, 2. 1–12).

26 Plato: *Epistula* II, 312e-313a.

27 *DB* (h XI/1, 16. 1–5) "Sic dicit Plato 'in Epistulis' apud 'omnium regem cuncta esse et illius gratia omnia' eumque 'causam bonorum omnium'. Et post pauca: 'Humanus enim animus affectat qualia sint illa intelligere, aspiciens illa cognata genera, quorum nihil sufficienter se habet, sed in rege ipso nihil tale'" Cf. *DB* (h XI/1, 32. 1–20).

own manner, which has caught his attention. With an immediate assimilation to Christian thought, he identifies these principles as *1* the Father, God, or cause of all things which is a threefold efficient, formal, and final cause; *2* the beginning of all things, begotten as Son by the Father, the creative intellect which is the first creature, is the mediator between the primal cause and sensible caused things, and executes the will of the father; and *3* the Spirit or motion connecting all things.[28] Given that Cusanus thoroughly transforms everything he reads, it is difficult to be certain whether this **[21]** material has been taken directly from a translation of Plato's text or another source quoting Plato. However, the words appended to the second citation in *De Beryllo* "as Proclus adds" (*ut addit Proclus*) suggest that the latter explanation is more likely to be correct.

Cusanus also introduces material from Plato's *Epistula* VII in another passage of *De Beryllo*, on this occasion explicitly mentioning the name of the author but not that of the work used.[29] The context for this paraphrase is a criticism of the ancient philosophers for failing to understand that the mathematical entities constructed by the human mind exist more truly in the mind itself than outside it: a point which follows from the last of four philosophical principles stated near the beginning of the text to the effect that man is himself the creator of conceptual beings and artificial forms.[30] Cusanus writes:

> For Plato said that a circle can be considered as it is named or defined, and drawn or conceived in the mind, that from these considerations the nature of the circle is not attained, and that the essence of the circle, which exists as something simple and incorruptible without any contrariety, is seen by intellect alone.[31]

In several other texts, this interpretation of *Epistula* VII is extended in order to suggest the possibility of a mode of quasi-definition above the level of discursive thought. Here, the argument seems to be that the normal rational definition of a circle involving the distinction between subject and predicate terms – i.e. "a circle is a gathering of all the points which are on the same plane equally distant from the centre" – can be traced back to a higher intellectual definition of the figure in which the distinction between subject and predicate terms is overcome. This idea is elaborated most fully in connection with the proposal regarding a "precise name" (*praecisum nomen*) through which all other names are known in *De Venatione Sapientiae*.[32]

28 *DB* (h XI/1, 35. 8–36. 6). Cf. *DNA* 20–21 (h XIII, 48. 12–51. 31). Cf. *DC* I. 5 (h III, 17. 1)-I. 8 (h III, 36. 12) for a more distant echo.

29 Plato: *Epist.* VII, 342b-d.

30 *DB* (h XI/1, 7. 1–8).

31 *DB* (h XI/1, 55. 2–6) *Nam Plato dicebat circulum, uti nominatur aut definitur, pingitur aut mente concipitur, considerari posse, quodque ex his natura circuli non habeatur, sed quod solo intellectu eius quiditas, quae sine omni contrario simplex et incorruptibilis exsistit, videatur*.

32 *DVS* 33 (h XII, 97. 1–100. 13). See also the more elliptical references to the same idea in *DB* (h XI/1, 57. 1–17) and *DNA* 22 (h XIII, 52. 1–53. 30).

The expansion in Cusanus' repertory of Platonic texts indicated by *De Beryllo* also includes Plato's *Parmenides* for which both the old translation by William Moerbeke and the new one by George of Trebizond were probably consulted.[33] However, extensive use of this Platonic dialogue occurs **[22]** mainly in the group of works produced during the next four years of his career: namely, *Tu quis es (De Principio)* (1459), *De Non Aliud* (1461), and *De Venatione Sapientiae* (1462).

In addition to reinforcing his knowledge of the ancient Platonic doctrines of the transcendent Forms and of participation derived earlier from the indirect tradition, Cusanus now seems to draw three important philosophical ideas in particular from a reading of the *Parmenides*. First, the Platonic dialogue provides arguments for the existence of a unitary first principle. In an important section of *De Principio*, Cusanus deploys the arguments of Parmenides and Zeno against the existence of a multiplicity which are quoted in Plato's dialogue in order to refute the doctrine of Proclus – whose commentary is also being used as a source at this point – that there is a multiplicity of divine unities.[34] In the course of his discussion, Cusanus specifically attacks the thesis that there is a multiplicity existing coeternal with the One on the grounds that there can only be one Eternity,[35] and the thesis that there is a multiplicity existing apart from the One on the grounds that multiplicity requires unity as its basis or hypostasis.[36]

The second point drawn by Cusanus from the *Parmenides* is the notion that the unitary first principle must be approached through negations. In discussing what he terms the "field" of unity – the sixth of the ten fields falling within the first of three regions in which philosophers have sought wisdom – in *De Venatione Sapientiae*, he notes that Plato had carefully surveyed this field and thereby discovered that the One, in order to be the cause of all things, must itself be none of them, and that the One, in order to be the cause of the many, must be not many. He adds that Plato, because he pursued the One – which he identified with the Good – through logic in his book *Parmenides*, denied all predicates of the One and therefore saw it as subsisting before all things in an ineffable manner.[37]

33 See *DB* (h XI/1, 12. 11–13). Cusanus had himself commissioned the George of Trebizond translation. On his use of the two translations of the *Parmenides* see R. Klibansky, *Plato's Parmenides in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: A Chapter in the History of Platonic Studies*, "Mediaeval and Renaissance Studies", I, 1941–1943, pp. 281–330, I. Ruocco, *Il Platone Latino. Il Parmenide: Giorgio di Trebisonda e il cardinale Cusano* (Firenze, 2003), pp. 7–14. According to Ruocco, in the *Apologia Doctae Ignorantiae*, *De Beryllo,* and *De Principio*, Cusanus seems to be working with the Moerbeke translation of the *Parmenides* embedded in Proclus' commentary, whereas in *De Non Aliud* and *De Venatione Sapientiae* he shows knowledge of the dialogue's text beyond the point where Moerbeke's version ended (142a). He therefore studied George's complete version between June 1459 and February 1461.

34 *De Principio* (h X 2b, 25. 1–30. 22).

35 *DPr* (h X 2b, 25. 1–17). Here, Cusanus is attempting to refute Proclus by using Plato.

36 *DPr* 28 (h X 2b, 28. 1–12). Here, Cusanus is attempting to refute Proclus by turning his own argument against him.

37 *DVS* 22 (h XII, 64. 1–8). Cf. *DB* (h XI/1, 12. 11–13).

[23] Third, the Platonic dialogue shows that the negations applied to the first principle must include denials that it is in itself, that it is being, that it is a principle, and – perhaps most strikingly – that it is one. In a passage of *De Principio*, Cusanus expands this argument about unity in a characteristic way by saying that we cannot even say of the first "the one is the one" (*unum est unum*) since the use of the copula shows that this is a proposition, or even say of the first "one one" (*unum unum*) since the suppression of the copula still leaves a duality.[38] In these cases, there is a complexity of predication or terms incompatible with unity. In the continuation of this discussion, Cusanus argues that we cannot apply any of the four possible logical forms to the first: saying that it is *x*, saying that it both is and is not *x*, saying that it is not *x*, and saying that it neither is nor is not *x*. In this case, the logical combinatory itself is a complexity incompatible with unity.

In fact, the dialogue *Parmenides* points towards the important notion that the Absolute or Maximum both enfolds and unfolds the coincidence of opposites, although Cusanus seems careful to maintain the distinction between pointing towards and achieving a philosophical standpoint. He can therefore argue on the one hand, that the Platonic dialogue is an early witness to Avicenna's notion that God is the unsingular singularity and the indistinct distinction and on the other,[39] that in attributing primacy to the One neither the Platonic dialogue nor its commentators has managed to glimpse the enigma of the "non other" (*non aliud*).[40]

The adoption of Thierry of Chartres' synthesis of Platonism, the reading of the Platonic *Epistulae*, and the study of Plato's *Parmenides* seem to represent three phases of a single trajectory in Nicholas of Cusa's encounter with Platonism. This trajectory clearly represents a mainly secular tradition of Platonism which fails in a philosophical sense particularly with respect to its maintenance of two erroneous tenets. According to *De Beryllo*, these are the doctrine that the Creator relates to the creature by causal necessity and the doctrine that there are existing non-mental exemplars.[41] However, there is also a second trajectory in Nicholas of Cusa's encounter with Platonism containing two phases represented by his adoption of Dionysius the Areopagite's theological Platonism and his reading of Proclus' treatises. This trajectory represents a mainly Christian tradition of Platonism which occupies an **[24]** uncertain position in both a historical and philosophical sense with respect to the secular tradition.

Cusanus reports what he knows about the life and writing of the figure whom he praises in a unique manner as "Great Dionysius" (*magnus Dionysius*) or as "Greatest Dionysius" (*maximus Dionysius*) – the choice of terminology is perhaps not accidental given that the notion of the maximal has such a central role in the

38 *DPr* (h X 2b, 19. 6–13).
39 *ADI* (h II, 9. 18–10. 7).
40 *DNA* 4 (h XIII, 10. 3–39).
41 On the first point, see *DB* (h XI/1, 38. 4–5), and on the second, see *DB* (h XI/1, 58. 1–10).

philosophy of this fifteenth-century writer.[42] In *Apologia Doctae Ignorantiae* and *De Beryllo*, he explains that Dionysius was a disciple of St. Paul who imitated Plato in philosophy.[43] In *De Non Aliud*, he inserts a sequence of quotations from Ambrogio Traversari's Latin translation of *De Caelesti Hierarchia* chapters 1, 2, 4, and 13, from *De Ecclesiastica Hierarchia* chapter 1, from *De Divinis Nominibus* chapters 1, 2, 4, 8–13, and 15 – together with what he terms the "Letter of Hierotheos" – , from *De Mystica Theologia*, and from the *Epistula ad Gaium*, in order to advance his argument.[44] In *Apologia Doctae Ignorantiae*, he supplies his student with a list of recommended Latin commentators on *De Mystica Theologia* which includes "Maximus the Monk", i.e. Maximus the Confessor, Hugh of St. Victor, "Robert of Lincoln", i.e. Robert Grosseteste, John the Scot, and the "Abbot of Vercelli", i.e. Thomas Gallus[45] while in *De Beryllo*, he himself makes extensive use of Albert the Great's "Commentaries on Dionysius", i.e. the commentary on *De Divinis Nominibus*, albeit criticizing this author for failing to understand the first principle in accordance with Dionysius' intention.[46]

Undoubtedly, the most important doctrine which Cusanus adopted from Dionysius is the contrast of negative and affirmative theology.[47] As indicated **[25]** by the final chapter of *De Docta Ignorantia* I where this doctrine is summarized and also by several passages in *Apologia Doctae Ignorantiae* where it is defended, the writer reveals himself to be skillful in unfolding the implications of the Dionysian theory. In *De Docta Ignorantia*, Cusanus emphasizes the theory's semantic aspects along typically Dionysian lines by arguing that where negation means superiority, negative names are more suitable to the inherently superior God than affirmative names, but where negation means inferiority, affirmative names are more suitable to the inherently superior God.[48] He also extends the Dionysian

42 For *magnus* see *DB* (h XI/1, 2. 1), for *maximus*, see *DDI* I. 26 (h I, 54. 22), *DNA* 14 (h XIII, 29. 22), etc.

43 There is no evidence that Cusanus entertained or admitted doubts regarding the apostolic status of the Pseudo-Dionysian writings despite the mounting evidence against it assembled by such important scholars as Desiderius Erasmus and Lorenzo Valla. See J. Monfasani, *Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite in Mid-Quattrocento Rome*, in *Supplementum Festivum, Studies in Honor of Paul Oskar Kristeller*, eds. J. Hankins, J. Monfasani, and F. Purnell, Jr. (Binghamton, 1987), pp. 189–219.

44 *DNA* 14 (h XI/1, 29. 8–38. 9). On Cusanus' use of the various Latin translations of Dionysius see L. Baur, *Cusanus Texte III. Marginalien 1. Nicolaus Cusanus und Ps.-Dionysius im Lichte der Zutate und Randbemerkungen des Cusanus = Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, phil.-hist. Klasse, 2. Abhandlung*, Heidelberg 1940–1941.

45 *ADI* (h II, 20. 21–21. 4). For a summary of Cusanus' use of Dionysian doctrine see W. Beierwaltes, *Der Verborgene Gott. Cusanus und Dionysius*, in *Platonismus in Christentum* (Frankfurt a. M., 1998), pp. 130–171. See also H. G. Senger, *Die Präferenz für ps.-Dionysius bei Nikolaus von Kues und seinem italienischen Umfeld*, in *Ludus sapientiae. Studien zum Werk und zur Wirkungsgeschichte des Nikolaus von Kues* (Leiden-Boston-Köln, 2002), pp. 228–254.

46 *DB* (h XI/1, 17. 1–18. 13, 27. 1–19, 29. 1–30.18 and 32. 1–20).

47 Cusanus also depends on Dionysius for the doctrine of nine angelic orders. However, he seems to treat this theory as a commonplace mediated through a variety of medieval commentators and does not explicitly connect with Dionysius. For a good illustration, see *De Ludo Globi* II (h IX, 77. 1–79. 22).

48 *DDI* I. 24–26 (h I, 48. 1–56. 20). Cf. *DDI* I. 17 (h I, 35. 3–12) and *DB* (h XI/1, 12. 1–13).

theory by proposing that where negation signifies superiority it also signifies infinity.[49] In *Apologia Doctae Ignorantiae*, Cusanus emphasizes the theory's ontological aspects along typically Dionysian lines by arguing that the application of negative names to God indicates the Creator's transcendence with respect to the creature and the application of affirmative names to God indicates the Creator's immanence with respect to the creature.[50] He also extends the Dionysian theory by proposing that God transcends the negative and affirmative alternation itself.[51]

But Cusanus' most important extension of Dionysius' thought is undoubtedly represented by the doctrine of "coincidence of opposites" (*coincidentia oppositorum*).[52] Although there are various passages in the Dionysian corpus to which Cusanus can reasonably appeal for a statement of this idea, one must admit that the notion of coincidence of opposites as developed from *De Docta Ignorantia* onwards constitutes a definite radicalization of the Areopagite's thought.[53]

The most compelling account is found in *De Beryllo* where Cusanus not only introduces the principle through the simile of the beryl – a refractive **[26]** optical instrument which is simultaneously concave and convex – but also specifies the link between the principle and the reading of Dionysius.[54] In one passage, Cusanus complains about the failure of scholastic commentators on Dionysius.

> When these commentators come to the conjunction of opposites, they interpret the text of the divine teacher disjunctively. Now it is a great thing to be able to fix oneself stably to the conjunction of opposites. For, although we know that this ought to happen, when we nevertheless revert to the discursiveness of reason, we often lapse and endeavor to provide arguments for a most certain vision which transcends all reason. At that point, therefore, we fall from the divine to the human and produce unstable and weak arguments.[55]

49 *DDI* I. 26 (h I, 54. 24–56. 4).

50 *ADI* (h II, 31. 23–32. 4).

51 *ADI* (h II, 19. 25–20. 15). Cf. *DNA* 19 (h XIII, 47. 6–14).

52 The principle of "coincidence of opposites' is one of the most persistent ideas running through Cusanus' work, appearing in a variety of different contexts and in a number of variant forms, and culminating in the "enigmas" of *Possest* and *Non Aliud*. See P. Wilpert, *Das Problem der coincidentia oppositorum in der Philosophie des Nikolaus von Kues*, in *Humanismus, Mystik und Kunst in der Welt des Mittelalters*, ed. J. Koch (Leiden-Köln, 1953), pp. 39–55, J. Stallmach, *Ineinsfall der Gegensätze und Weisheit des Nichtwissens* (Münster, 1989), pp. 1–36, and R. Haubst, *Streifzüge in die cusanische Theologie* (Münster, 1991), pp. 23–26, 117–140.

53 The establishment of the principle of coincidence of opposites through the authority of a Dionysian text emerges most clearly from *DDI* I. 16 (h I, 30. 34–31. 12) where the Blessed Bartholomew's definition of theology as "simultaneously the maximum and the minimum (*maxima pariter et minima*)" is quoted.

54 The first reference to this notion in *De Beryllo* occurs at *DB* (h XI/1, 11. 1–4).

55 *DB* (h XI/1, 32. 4–11) "Sed quando ad oppositorum coniunctionem perveniunt, textum magistri divini disiunctive interpretantur. Magnum est posse se stabiliter in coniunctione figere oppositorum. Nam etsi sciamus ita fieri debere, tamen, quando ad discursum rationis revertimur, labimur frequenter et

A few pages later, Cusanus outlines the correct way of interpreting Dionysius' thought.

> Thus, if perchance you wish to extend Dionysius – who attributed many names to God – by amplifying his thought at will, proceed with the beryl and the enigma to the beginning of any divine name whatsoever . . . for by seeing one contrary through the beryl you will see that the beginning of the other contrary is in it . . . therefore, since the beginning of one contrary is in the other, their transformations are circular, and there is a common subject of both contraries.[56]

The principle of coincidence of opposites is applied in many different contexts by Cusanus, and it is significant that the association between this principle and the Dionysian text is generally maintained. An example from his earlier works would be the epistemological attitude of "learned ignorance" (*docta ignorantia*) which must be taken as a corrective to any discursive argument regarding the infinite.[57] An example from the later period would be **[27]** the theological position whereby God in the sense of "not other" (*non aliud*) can be treated as unity and not unity at the same time.[58]

Before turning to Cusanus' reading of Proclus, we should note that at least one doctrine must be placed in the special category of being derived from both Dionysius' and Proclus' writings. This is the notion that the relation of participation between particular and Form advocated by classical Platonism should be understood as divisible into a threefold structure of participating, participated, and un-participated terms, the doctrine shared by these two Greek sources attempting to solve the problem of how a unitary Form can be inseparable from the multiple particulars by distinguishing within the Form an aspect which remains unitary and an aspect which undergoes multiplication. But such a solution to the problem of participation obviously gives rise to further problems, and the fifteenth-century writer seems to concentrate on the following two related questions. The first

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visionis certissimae nitimur rationes reddere, quae est supra omnem rationem, et ideo tunc cadimus de divinis ad humana et instabiles atque exiles rationes adducimus". Since the passage continues with an immediate citation of Plato's *Epistula* II, 312c with respect to the lapse, clearly the combined authority of Dionysius and Plato is being invoked to support Cusanus' position.

56 *DB* (h XI/1, 46. 1–15) "Sic si forte velis magnum Dionysium, qui deo multa nomina tribuit, ampliando ad beneplacitum extendere, cum beryllo et aenigmate ad cuiuslibet nominis principium pergas. . . . Videndo enim per beryllum unum contrarium vides in eo esse principium alterius contrarii. . . . Cum ergo in uno contrario sit principium alterius, ideo sunt circulares transmutationes et commune utriusque contrarii subiectum". In Cusanus' text, these theoretical statements are interwoven with the citation of a physical example: namely, the beginning of heat in the cold.

57 *DDI* I. 17 (h I, 35. 1–12). Cf. *ADI* (h II, 21. 7–22. 9 and 31. 16–32. 4).

58 *DNA* 15–16 (h XIII, 38. 10–42. 16). Cf. *DNA* 22 (h XIII, 52. 1–53. 30). The important relation between the coincidence of opposites and the mystical tradition via Dionysius cannot be pursued here. On this topic see A. Haas, *Deum mistice videre . . . in caligine coincidencie. Zum Verhältnis Nikolaus von Kues zur Mystik* (Basel, 1989).

question about participation is: What is the relation between the un-participated and the participated terms? Cusanus gives the answer in one of the most difficult passages of *De Coniecturis* I by positing a unitary un-participated term which undergoes multiplication into participated terms through the relation of the multiplicity of participating terms to the un-participated term, and further identifies the multiplicative relation itself between the un-participated and participating terms with a coincidence of opposites consisting of maximum and minimum. The multiplicative relation between the un-participated and participating terms is here described as a power of the un-participated term which, by being a conjunction, both a conjunction and a disjunction, a disjunction, and neither a conjunction nor a disjunction of maximal, nearly maximal, minimum, and nearly minimum participated terms, represents a quasi-fourfold power capable of producing a coincidence of the un-participated and the participated as such.[59] The second question about participation is: What principles are identified with the un-participated and participated terms? Cusanus gives various answers in different texts: for example, the un-participated term is identified with Unity in *De Coniecturis* I, with Equality in *De Principio*, and **[28]** with Non-Other in *De Non Aliud*[60] while the un-participated and participated terms are identified with God and the Intellect participated by a multiplicity of intellects in *De Beryllo*, and with the Un-participated One and with the Participated One in *De Principio*.[61] Contextualization of the last two passages is provided by explicit discussions of Plato's thought in *Epistula* II and *Parmenides*, respectively.

The importance of Proclus for the development of Cusanus' philosophical thought is shown not only by what is stated about Proclus but also by his association with a particular speaker in the dialogue *De Non Aliud*.[62] At the very

59 *DC* I. 11 (h III, 58. 1–60. 6). The argument is actually more complicated than the summary presented here. Additionally, Cusanus states that his theory is a conjecture about participation and also that conjecture itself is participation; supplements the fourfold dialectical structure with a arithmetical structure; and expands the fourfold arithmetical structure (1, 2, 3, 4) into a tenfold structure (1, 1+2, 1+2+3, 1+2+3+4).

60 See *DC* I. 11 (h III, 58. 1–60. 6), *DPr* (h X 2b, 36. 1–17), *DNA* 10 (h XIII, 21. 14–29).

61 See *DB* (h XI/1, 37. 1–22) and *DPr* (h X 2b, 28. 1–30. 22). In the *De Beryllo* passage, Cusanus also identifies the participated term with World Soul and the multiplicity of souls.

62 The relation between Proclus and Cusanus has been extensively studied in recent years. The most important contributions are A. Textual Studies: H.-D. Saffrey, *Sur la tradition manuscrite de la* Théologie platonicienne *de Proclus*, in *Autour d'Aristote. Recueil d'études de philosophie ancienne et médiévale offert à Monseigneur A. Mansion* (Louvain, 1955), pp. 387–430, *Pietro Balbi et la première traduction latine de la* Théologie platonicienne *de Proclus*, in *Miscellanea Codicologica F. Masai dicata MCMLXXIX*, ed. P. Cockshaw, etc. (Ghent, 1979), pp. 425–437, R. Haubst, *Die Thomas- und Proklos-Exzerpte des 'Nicolaus Treverensis' in Codicillus Strassburg 84*, "Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft", I, 1968, pp. 17–51, C. Steel, *La place du* Vat. lat. *11600 dans la tradition latine du commentaire* In Parmenidem *de Proclus*, "Scriptorium", XXXI, 1977, pp. 262–266, Id., *Proclus, Commentaire sur le Parménide de Platon, Traduction de Guillaume de Moerbeke, tome I* (Leuven, 1982), pp. 12*–22*, 36*–37*, *tome II* (Leuven, 1985), pp. 529–555, H. G. Senger, *Cusanus-Texte III. Marginalien. 2. Proclus Latinus. Die Exzerpte und Randnoten des Nikolaus von Kues zu den lateinischen Übersetzungen der Proclus-Schriften,*

beginning of the text, the interlocutor labeled as "the Abbot" – i.e. John Andrea Vigevius, abbot of Sezadium – reports that he and his companions have **[29]** been "occupied with deep matters" (*in altis versari*). He himself has been occupied with Plato's *Parmenides* and Proclus' *Commentarius in Parmenidem*, "Peter" – i.e. Pietro Balbi of Pisa, later bishop of Tropaea – with Proclus' *Theologia Platonis* which he is translating into Latin, "Ferdinand" – i.e. Ferdinand Matim of Portugal, the Cardinal's personal physician – with Aristotle, and Cusanus himself with Dionysius the Areopagite. At the beginning of his intervention in the dialogue, "Peter" states that he has been translating "Proclus the Platonist" (*Proculus ille platonicus*) into Latin and that, since he has found many similarities of doctrine and expression with the Dionysian material summarized earlier by Cusanus, he would like to have some information also about Proclus' *Theologia Platonica*. Cusanus replies by saying that it is certain that Proclus was later in time than Dionysius although it is uncertain whether he saw his writings, and then commences the more detailed discussion by asking Peter to specify which particular points of agreement between the two authors he had noted.

Cusanus' relation to Proclus can be clarified first, by considering doctrines which are attributed to Proclus and consistent with the teaching of Dionysius. These include the notion that the term "self-subsistent" (*authypostaton*) can only be applied to the One in the sense that it is the cause of self-subsistent things not

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2.1. Theologia Platonis. Elementatio theologica = Abhandlungen der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, phil.-hist. Klasse 1986, 2. Abhandlung (Heidelberg, 1986), K. Bormann, *Cusanus Texte III. Marginalien 2. Proclus latinus. Die Exzerpte und Randnoten des Nikolaus von Kues zu den lateinischen Übersetzungen der Proclus-Schriften, 2.2. Expositio in Parmenidem Platonis = Abhandlungen der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, phil.-hist. Klasse 1986,3. Abhandlung* (Heidelberg, 1986); B. Doctrinal Studies: W. Beierwaltes, *Cusanus und Proklos. Zum neuplatonischen Ursprung des non-aliud*, in *Nicolò Cusano agli inizi del mondo moderno. Atti del Congresso internazionale in occasione del V centenario della morte di Nicolò Cusano, Bressanone 6–10 settembre 1964* (Firenze, 1970), pp. 137–140, Id., *Denken des Einen*, pp. 216–222, Id., *Das seiende Eine. Zur neuplatonischen Interpretation der zweiten Hypothesis des platonischen* Parmenides*. Das Beispiel Cusanus*, in *Proclus et son influence, Actes du Colloque de Neuchâtel, juin 1985*, eds. G. Boss and G. Seel (Zürich, 1987), pp. 287–297, Id., *Platonismus im Christentum*, pp. 130–171, Id., Centrum Tocius Vite*. Zur Bedeutung von Proklos'* Theologia Platonis *im Denken des Cusanus*, in *Proclus et la Théologie platonicienne. Actes du Colloque international de Louvain, 13–16 mai 1998, en l'honneur de H.-D. Saffrey et L.G. Westerink*, eds. A.-P. Segonds and C. Steel (Leuven-Paris, 2000), pp. 629–651, K. Bormann, *Zur Lehre des Nikolaus von Kues von der 'Andersheit' und deren Quellen*, "Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft", X, 1973, pp. 130–137, Id., *Affirmation und Negation. Der* Parmenides*-Kommentar des Proklos in Nikolaus von Kues' Schrift* Tu quis es*,* in *600 Jahre Nikolaus von Kues (1401–2001), Tradition und Aktualität Negativer Theologie* = "Theologische Quartalschrift", CLXXXI, 2001, pp. 84–96, S. Otto, *Langage dialectique et silence hiérophantique. L'horizon de la métaphysique chez Proclus, Cusanus et Hegel,* "Archivio di filosofia", I, 1975, pp. 105–114, F. E. Cranz, *The* De Aequalitate *and* De Principio *of Nicholas of Cusa*, in *Nicholas of Cusa on Christ and the Church, Essays in Honor of Chandler McCuskey Brooks for the American Cusanus Society*, eds. G. Christianson and T. M. Izbicki (Leiden, 1996), pp. 271–280.

coeternal with it such as man's eternal soul,[63] and the notion that the intellect approaches the One non-intellectively for, even in applying the term "one" to the First Principle, it does this by divining something of the latter's hypostasis through an unending desire for its object[64]

Cusanus' relation to Proclus can also be clarified by considering doctrines which are attributed to Proclus but inconsistent with the teaching of Dionysius. In a very important section of *De Principio*, the arguments of Parmenides and Zeno against the notion of a multiplicity of existents which Plato reports in the first part of the *Parmenides* are turned against Proclus' doctrine of a multiplicity of self-subsistent principles such as Forms co-eternal with the One.[65] Towards the end of the same text, he seemingly expounds the theological doctrine elaborated by Proclus after the first two hypotheses of the *Parmenides* and summarized in his *Theologia Platonis*. According to this theory, there is a distinction between the One and the One-Being, there is a division of the One-Being – or the participated being or the contracted being – into three modes of being called being, life, and intellect, and there is a further **[30]** division of life – the second mode of being – into a simple unity, the unitary life, and the multitude of lives, and of intellect – the third mode of being – into a simple unity, the unitary intellect, and the multitude of intellects.[66] Also according to this theory, the One is identified with the First God who exercises a universal providence. The multiple divisions of the One-Being are identified with secondary gods who exercise partial providence, these secondary gods – who participate in the First God in a primal manner – including a division into intellectual gods, celestial gods, and cosmic gods. Moreover, the First God is identified with Jupiter and one of the secondary gods who preside over mechanical arts with Vulcan.[67] Cusanus notes that this doctrine of a multitude of gods follows from the false notion of the world's priority to the divine, whereas the true notion of the divine's priority to the world leads to the notion of a single God.

Finally, Cusanus' relation to Proclus can be clarified by considering doctrines which are attributed to Dionysius but not attributed to Proclus, although a reading of passages *not* quoted by Cusanus is sufficient to demonstrate that these doctrines are typical of Proclus. The most important of these is undoubtedly the coincidence of opposites itself which Proclus often identifies with intellectual activity, for example in saying that the demiurgic intellect enfolds the multiple in a unified way, the divided in an indivisible way, and so forth.[68] Presumably,

63 *DPr* (h X 2b, 24. 1–14).

64 *DPr* (h X 2b, 27. 1–11 and 29. 1–12).

65 *DPr* (h X 2b, 25. 1–30. 22).

66 *DPr* (h X 2b, 39. 1–34).

67 *DPr* (h X 2b, 40. 1–14). There is perhaps a briefer reference to the doctrine of Proclus' *Theologia Platonis* concerning God and the opposition of motion and rest at *De Possest* (h XI/2, 21. 1–13).

68 See for example Proclus: *Commentarius in Parmenidem* III. 807. 29–810. 22.

Cusanus reads selectively here in order to situate this doctrine so fundamental to his philosophical thinking within a context which seems to have uniquely Christian character.

The different philosophical themes which we have been considering so far were derived either directly from Plato's works or indirectly from the writings of later Platonists. But given that such ideas were not transmitted through the literary tradition without a dialectical relation to other tendencies, a complete picture of Cusanus as the summation of medieval Platonic theology has not yet been drawn. In order to achieve the latter, we must also consider various philosophical motifs derived from Aristotle and from Aristotelian commentators either separately or in combination. Now it was generally assumed that Aristotle had specialized in the critique of Plato's positions. Therefore, philosophical ideas drawn from the former by a writer of predominantly Platonic tendencies like Cusanus would be introduced either in a negative manner in order to criticize them and thereby defend the Platonic viewpoint, or else in a synthetic manner in **[31]** order to endorse them and therefore modify the Platonic viewpoint. We shall briefly consider some examples of the negative and synthetic approaches to Aristotelian doctrine.[69]

A negative approach to Aristotelian doctrine occurs in the case of Cusanus' discussion of the law of contradiction. Given that this law constitutes the most fundamental principle on which the Aristotelian logic is based, it is not surprising to find it at issue when the German philosopher defends his Dionysian doctrine of learned ignorance from the criticisms of the Neo-Scholastic Johannes Wenck.[70] This debate is recorded in the treatise entitled *Apologia Doctae Ignorantiae*. At one point, Cusanus laments the fact that many people, in the belief that what has been established by prolonged acceptance can be asserted as universal law, will defend this position as though their lives depended upon it. Since he next remarks that the currently dominant "Aristotelian faction" (*Aristotelica secta*) attacks the doctrine of the learned ignorance as a form of heresy,[71] it is clear that Cusanus is

69 Occasionally, Cusanus introduces Aristotelian ideas in a positive manner in order to endorse them. Examples of this approach are the so-called doctrine of transcendentals – and especially the notion of the convertibility of being and unity – in *DNA* 18–19 (h XIII, 44. 1–47. 14) (cf. *DVS* 21 (h XII, 60. 1–12), and the notion of intellect – understood as a triunity and as a multiplicity of forms – in *DB* (h XI/1, 36. 1–15, 39. 1–21) and *DVS* 8 (h XII, 22. 1–24. 22) (cf. *DNA* 10 (h XIII, 22. 23–23. 9). Cusanus' general attitude to Aristotle seems to be summarized in the following passage in *DNA* 19 (h XIII, 47. 10–12): "But although that philosopher was inadequate in first philosophy or mental philosophy, he nevertheless wrote many things worthy of all praise in rational and moral philosophy (*Verum etsi philosophus ille in prima seu mentali philosophia defecerit, multa tamen in rationali ac morali omni laude dignissima conscripsit*)".

70 The law of contradiction will be defined at *ADI* (h II, 14. 12–14) where Cusanus speaks of "the principle that 'everything either is or is not the case' (*principium quodlibet est vel non est*)". At *DB* (h XI/1, 51. 10–12). Cusanus notes Aristotle's view that the law of contradiction cannot itself be demonstrated.

71 As we have seen above, learned ignorance constitutes the primary epistemological version of the coincidence of opposites.

identifying the rule concerning self-contradiction as that whose prolonged acceptance has turned into universal law.[72]

The most detailed critique of the law of contradiction occurs in a passage of *De Non Aliud* where the interlocutors "Ferdinand" and "Nicholas" come to an agreement that Aristotle would not have needed the laborious logic and the art of definition – neither of which he was able to bring to perfection – , and would also have been able to resolve the difficulties regarding species and ideas, if he grasped a certain "secret" (*secretum*). The speakers then present **[32]** two arguments against the real source of Aristotle's problem: namely, the law of contradiction. Ferdinand's argument runs as follows:

> That Philosopher believed it to be most certain that an affirmative contradicts a negative, and that as contradictories they cannot be said at the same time of the same thing. He said this on the basis of reason concluding that this is true. But if someone had asked him 'What is other?' he could certainly have answered truly. 'It is not other than other'. Moreover, if the questioner had added, 'Why is other other?' he could indeed have answered as at first, 'Because it is not other than other.' He would therefore have seen that Not-other and other do not contradict each other as contradictories. And he would have perceived that that which he names 'the first principle' is not sufficient for showing the way to the truth contemplated by the mind above reason.[73]

Nicholas' argument is the following:

> But if someone had asked him whether he saw contradiction in the contradictories, he would have answered that he truly did. But suppose that he were next asked if he did not see contradiction without a contradiction – given that what he saw in the contradictories he saw antecedently, just as he might see a cause before its effect antecedently. He could surely not have denied that this was the case. For just as he saw that contradiction in the contradictories is a contradiction of the contradictories, similarly

72 *ADI* (h II, 6. 3–12). Cusanus here adds that the contemporary Aristotelians are, at least in this respect, analogous with Jews, Saracens, and other heretics. Cf. *ADI* (h II, 1. 9–11).

73 *DNA* 19 (h XIII, 46. 19–29) "Philosophus ille certissimum credidit negativae affirmativam contradicere, quodque simul de eodem utpote repugnantia dici non possent. Hoc autem dixit rationis via id ipsum sic verum concludentis. Quodsi quis ab eo quaesivisset, quid est aliud, utique vere respondere potuisset: 'non aliud quam aliud est'. Et consequenter si quaerens adiecisset: quare aliud est aliud? sane quidem, ut prius, dicere valuisset: 'quia non aliud quam aliud est'; et ita 'non aliud' et aliud neque sibi ut repugnantia vidisset contradicere. Atque illud, quod primum principium nominat, pro viae ostensione perspexisset non sufficere ad veritatem, quae supra rationem mente contemplatur". For further criticism of the law of contradiction as applied to the sphere of physics, see *DB* (h XI 1, 42. 1–45. 18).

> prior to the contradictories and prior to the contradiction stated there he would have seen contradiction.[74]

It is important to realize that Cusanus, in challenging the law of contradiction from the viewpoint of the Non-Other or of the contradiction of contradictories, is questioning its global application rather than its local validity. **[33]** This point emerges clearly from the *Apologia Doctae Ignorantiae* where he rejects Johannes Wenck's charge that the doctrine of learned ignorance undermines the fundamental principle of knowledge and all processes of inference. As Cusanus explains, the law of contradiction applies to the "reason" (*ratio*) which is analogous to hearing but does not apply to the "intellect" (*intellectus*) which is analogous to sight, it making no more sense to argue that the evidence of intellect invalidates that of reason than to maintain that the evidence of sight invalidates the evidence of hearing.[75]

The negative approach to Aristotelian doctrine embodied in his discussion of the law of contradiction has obvious repercussions in Cusanus' occasional treatments of issues arising in Aristotle's *Physics* and *Metaphysics*. Among the more important examples of the former might be mentioned the argument in *De Beryllo* that Aristotle had correctly approached the problem of change by seeking three underlying principles, but failed to solve the problem by introducing privation – which is separated from its opposite – rather than connection – in which the opposites coincide, as the third term.[76] Among the most interesting examples of the latter might be mentioned the argument in the same work that Aristotle had rightly embarked on the task of seeking the notion of substance, but failed to complete the task by consigning what was sought to the negative cognitive state of deficiency – i.e. *aporia* – rather than of superiority – i.e. learned ignorance.[77]

Turning from the negative to the synthetic approach to Aristotelian doctrine, we find a particularly important example of the latter in Cusanus' discussions of

74 *DNA* 19 (h XIII, 47. 1–8) "At si quispiam eum interrogasset, numquid in contradicentibus contradictionem vidisset, veraciter se videre respondisset. Deinde interrogatus, si id, quod in contradicentibus vidit, anterioriter sicut causam ante effectum videret, nonne tunc contradictionem videret absque contradictione, hoc certe sic se habere negare nequivisset. Sicut enim in contradicentibus contradictionem esse contradicentium contradictionem vidit, ita ante contradicentia contradictionem ante dictam vidisset contradictionem". Immediately after the end of this quotation Cusanus appeals to Dionysius' notion that God is the opposition of opposites without opposition. See *De Divinis Nominibus* 5. 10, 825B.

75 *ADI* (h II, 14. 10–15. 16). Immediately after the end of this passage also Cusanus appeals to the Dionysian doctrine that God is the opposition of opposites and to his own earlier discussion of this question in *De Coniecturis* I. 6 (h III, 24. 1–9) and II. 1 (h III, 75. 1–21) – the other authorities invoked at this point are Augustine, Algazel, and Henry Bate. This argument is briefly introduced at *ADI* (h II, 1. 7–15).

76 *DB* (h XI 1, 40. 1–42. 18). Cf. *DB* (h XI 1, 45. 1–18).

77 *DB* (h XI 1, 48. 1–53. 18). In the course of this discussion at *DB* (h XI 1, 49. 9–17), Cusanus also observes that Aristotle was correct in rejecting the Platonist identification of genera and species with separate substances. On the Platonic and Aristotelian theories of universals according to Cusanus, see below.

the theory of universals or – placing this in a more specific historical context – the theory of Forms or Ideas. Although this topic is examined from the more logical viewpoint in *De Docta Ignorantia*,[78] we shall here concentrate on the more extensive epistemological treatment in *Idiota De Mente*. In practice if not officially, among this dialogue's interlocutors the "Philosopher" turns out to be a representative of Aristotelianism, the "Orator" a representative of Humanism, and the "Layman" a representative of the Aristotelian- Platonic synthesis.

[34] From the Layman's discourse together with the learned comments of the Philosopher, we can glean the most salient features – according to Cusanus' reading – of the Aristotelian theory, the Platonic theory, and the combination of the two. According to the Aristotelian doctrine, the contents of sensation form the basis of the contents of reason and the contents of reason form the basis of the contents of intellect, reason turning towards sensation in order to stimulate its activity. Aristotelianism also holds that intellect does not inherently contain multiplicity, that there is a disjunction between the human and the divine, and that the divine is a single infinite Form.[79] According to the Platonic doctrine by contrast, the contents of sensation form the basis of the contents of reason whereas the contents of reason do not form the basis of the contents of intellect, reason turning towards intellect in order to stimulate its activity. Platonism also holds that intellect does inherently contain multiplicity, that there is a disjunction between the human and the divine, and that the divine is a multiplicity of Forms.[80] According to the combined doctrine, the contents of sensation form the basis of the contents of reason, reason by turning first towards sensation and then to the divine cognitively multiplies the latter's single infinite Form, the result being a semi-transcendent relation between divine and human equivalent to the image of God or the intellect.[81]

Certain additional features of this complicated epistemological theory require comment. First, it is worth noting that the viewpoints characterized here as the Aristotelian and Platonic respectively correspond broadly to the contrasting positions described by Aristotle in his *Metaphysics* and other writings. On the other hand, the viewpoint characterized as combined corresponds to the highest level of the synthesis of Platonic doctrine derived by Cusanus from his reading of Thierry of Chartres.[82] We should also note that the doctrines presented have been somewhat simplified in our summary. For example, the distinction between different levels of forms (real-conceptual) is interwoven with a distinction between different levels of names (linguistic) in such a way that, on the level of reason forms

78 *DDI* II. 6 (h I, 79. 1–81. 15) and II. 9 (h I, 89. 26–96. 11).

79 *IDM* 2 (h V, 65. 1–66. 20) and 4 (h V, 77. 1–79. 10).

80 On the contrast of Aristotelian and Platonic epistemological positions, see also *DDI* II. 9 (h I, 89. 26–96. 11).

81 For the first point, see *IDM* 2 (h V, 63. 1–66. 20). For the second point, see *IDM* 2 (h V, 67. 1–68. 16), 3 (h V, 71. 1–9), 4 (h V, 74. 1–79. 10) and 7 (h V, 99. 1–107. 14). For the first point, see also *DDI* II. 6 (h I, 80. 1–81. 15).

82 See above.

precede names whereas on the level of intellect Form (or forms) is equivalent to Name (or names).[83] Finally, it is **[35]** worth noting that the relation between the viewpoints characterized here as Aristotelian and Platonic must itself be understood in terms of the coincidence of opposites. From this it also follows that neither a purely Aristotelian nor a purely Platonic account of the relation between the Aristotelian and the Platonic viewpoints is ultimately possible.[84]

On the assumption that Cusanus' role as summation of the medieval Platonic tradition is virtually exhausted by the reactions to Plato, Aristotle, and their successors which we have been studying so far, we can now turn to the consideration of certain aspects of Cusanus' singularity.[85]

Cusanus as singularity[86]

A somewhat original treatment of the classical Pauline, Augustinian, and Anselmian notion of man as the image of God and of that image's hermeneutic function

83 *IDM* 2 (h V, 62. 18)-3 (h V, 70. 17). Cusanus associates this doctrine of names with Hermes Trismegistus.

84 *IDM* 2 (h V, 66. 19–67. 3), 3 (h V, 71. 1–2), and 4 (h V, 77. 15–26). Cf. *DDI* II. 9 (h I, 94. 9–96. 11) where Cusanus comments that learned ignorance must be applied to the tenets of Aristotelian and Platonic philosophy.

85 Cusanus does reveal some interest in pre-Platonic and early medieval philosophy. Among important examples of the former are various citations of Anaxagoras with respect to the notion of everything in everything (see *DDI* II. 5 (h I, 76. 3–5); *DB* (h XI 1, 4. 1–3, 35, 1–19, 67. 1–8); *DVS* 27 (h XII, 81. 1–4)), of Protagoras on the notion of humanity as measure (see *DB* (h XI 1, 6. 1–8, 65. 1–3 and 69. 3–6)), and of Socrates on learned ignorance (see *ADI* (h II, 2. 14–3. 5)). Among significant examples of the latter are certain citations of Maimonides regarding divine naming (see *DDI* I. 16 (h I, 31. 13–19), I. 24 (h I, 51. 25–26) and I. 26 (h I, 54. 19–24)), of Algazel on non-discursive reason (see *ADI* (h II, 13. 3–10)) – this approving citation can be contrasted with the critical references to Albertus Magnus on the same point (see *DB* (h XI 1, 18. 3–6, 29, 1–30. 18 and 32 1–4)) – , and of Avicenna on the divine singularity (see *ADI* (h II, 9. 18–10. 9)) – this favorable citation can be contrasted with the critical reference to David of Dinant on the same point (see *DNA* 17 (h XIII, 42. 25–43. 15)). Another aspect of Cusanus' view of the history of philosophy is the possibly cautious adherence to the tendency of associating the greatest antiquity with the greatest profundity. See the interpretation of Hermes Trismegistus at *IDM* 3 (h V, 69. 1–16) as the centre of the large cluster of Platonic doctrines derived from Thierry of Chartres (who himself had cited Hermes in this connection).

86 There are certain doctrines of Cusanus which fall neither into our category of "Singularity" (because they are clearly shared with earlier thinkers) nor into our category of "Summation" (because they are not Platonic in the obvious sense). Of particular importance here is the set of doctrines associated with the notions of the maximal and the infinite. In Cusanus' work, the notion of God as Maximum is derived from the Stoics through Augustine and Anselm, and the notion of God as Infinity derived from Hilary of Poitiers through Thierry of Chartres, both ideas being combined with more recent physical and mathematical doctrines elaborated in the context of late medieval Nominalism. For the physics, see P. Duhem, *Le système du monde. Histoire des doctrines cosmologiques de Platon à Copernic* (Paris, 1959), tome 10, pp. 247–347, and E. Grant, *The Condemnation of 1277. God's Absolute Power and Physical Thought in the Late Middle Ages*, "Viator", X (1979), pp. 211–244. See also note 94.

can be seen as forming the conceptual nucleus of some of the more singular developments in Cusanus' thought. Here, the hermeneutic activity of the image is no longer totally subordinated to the goal of logical **[36]** formalism, even where the latter is implicit rather than explicit, but achieves a quasi-autonomy approaching that suggested by modern thinkers like Heidegger or Gadamer.[87] Its ideal is the coincidence of the universal, theoretical, and non-temporal elements with the individual, practical, and temporal aspects which oppose them rather than the exclusive preoccupation with the former characteristic of earlier thinking.[88] Among the more singular developments we need to consider is first, the notion of "conjecture" (*coniectura*). This notion is associated closely with the activity of the human image not only because it is practical but also because – as shown by the etymology whereby the Latin compound *con* + *iactura* reflects the Greek compound sum + bolon – it is hermeneutic. Secondly, we must consider the notion of "enigma' (*aenigma*). This notion is associated with the activity of the human image not only because it is hermeneutic but also because it is individual, the latter being shown by references to the endless variety of its possible instances or formulations.[89]

The notion of conjecture is explained clearly in the prologue to the first book of Cusanus' early treatise *De Coniecturis* which is devoted entirely to this topic.[90] Here, the author introduces the sequences of demonstrative examples and

87 One uses the precautionary terms "approaching" and "quasi-autonomy" because Cusanus, despite his adumbration of certain more recent philosophical developments, also remains within the sphere of medieval and early modern onto-theology. On the relation between Cusanus and Heidegger, see W. Beierwaltes, *Identität und Differenz, Zum Prinzip cusanischen Denkens = Rheinisch-Westfälische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Vorträge G 220* (Opladen, 1977), pp. 31–38, although the question of hermeneutics is ignored.

88 This is undoubtedly the predominant sense in which Cusanus establishes the important correlation between Protagoras' dictum that man is the measure of all things and the Hermetic idea that man is a secondary creator. See *DB* (h XI 1, 6. 1–7. 13). However, it is not illegitimate to interpret this notion of "subjectivity" also in conjunction with the prevailing "intellective" approach of medieval Platonism and with similar ideas drawn from the Nominalist tradition in order to depict Cusanus as something of a forerunner of modern Idealism. See K. Flasch, *Der Mensch als Mass Gottes*, in *Gott Heute. Fünfzehn Beiträge zur Gottesfrage*, ed. N. Kutschki (Mainz, 1967), pp. 20–30, E. Fräntzki, *Nikolaus von Kues und das Problem der absoluten Subjectivität* (Meisenheim am Glan, 1972), pp. 75–108, F. Hoffmann, *Nominalistische Vorlaufer für die Erkenntnisproblematik bei Nikolaus von Kues,* "Mitteilungen und Forschungsbeiträge der Cusanus-Gesellschaft", XI = *Nikolaus von Kues in der Geschichte des Erkenntnisproblems. Akten des Symposiums in Trier vom 18. bis 20. Oktober 1973*, ed. R. Haubst (Mainz, 1975), pp. 125–167, and T. van Velthoven, *Gottesschau und menschliche Kreativität* (Leiden, 1977), pp. 74–116. See note 5.

89 It is because Cusanus is assigning an unusually important role to hermeneutical activity within philosophy that he can stress affirmative rather than negative theology in late writings such as *De Apice Theoriae*. Here, the affirmative terms are not employed in the logical sense – where their univocal character has always to be counteracted by the ambivalent procedure of "learned ignorance" – but take on the hermeneutical sense of affirmative "enigmas".

90 J. Koch, *Die Ars coniecturalis des Nikolaus von Kues* (Köln, 1956) discusses the nature of this doctrine and suggests various possible historical sources.

practical applications which constitute the subject-matter of this work by **[37]** contrasting on the one hand, "precision of truth" (*praecisio veritatis*) or "unity of truth" (*veritatis unitas*) and on the other hand, "conjectural otherness" (*alteritas coniecturalis*). He explains that since precision of truth is unattainable by human beings – a conclusion which had already been drawn in the treatise *De Docta Ignorantia* from the lack of proportion between truth and the intellect – any "positive assertion" (*positiva assertio*) about truth must be conjectural.[91] The general description of conjecture continues in a later chapter where Cusanus argues that lack of proportion does not preclude a relation of participation. This permits him not only to define conjecture in terms of participation – "a conjecture is therefore a positive assertion participating in truth, as it is, with a degree of otherness (*coniectura igitur est positiva assertio, in alteritate veritatem, uti est, participans*)" – but also to embark upon a series of conjectures about participation itself.[92]

In the preceding chapter, Cusanus had argued that one can infinitely increase the truth of conjectures without attaining the infinity of truth, although he admits that this apparently self-contradictory idea can only be conceived by intellect operating above reason.[93] At this point, he was undoubtedly applying to the specific notion of conjecture the important tenet of Neoplatonic philosophy which he had already exploited in connection with the Maximum, the Infinite, the Necessary, and certain other concepts. This states that, since continuity and disjunction are inseparable features of the emanative relation between higher and lower principles, the twofold structure of cause and effect must be viewed as a threefold structure of unparticipated, a participated, and a participant.[94] Thus, conjecture (as

91 *DC*, prol. (h III, 2. 1–12). Cf. *DDI* I. 1 (h I, 5. 1–6. 24). Cusanus' theories regarding the proportion (and absence of proportion) between God and creation and between created things are of great importance, revealing a combination of traditional Pythagoreanism and more recent developments in mathematics. For the background, see J. Murdoch, *The Medieval Language of Proportion: Elements of the Interaction with Greek Foundations and the Development of New Mathematical Techniques*, in *Scientific Change: Historical Studies in the Intellectual, Social, and Technical Conditions for Scientific Discovery and Technical Invention, From Antiquity to the Present*, ed. A. C. Crombie (New York, 1963), pp. 237–271 – Cusanus is discussed briefly on pp. 248 and 250 – and for the Cusan development H. G. Senger, *Die Philosophie des Nikolaus von Kues vor dem Jahre 1440. Untersuchungen zur Entwicklung einer Philosophie in der Frühzeit des Nikolaus (1430–1440)* (Münster, 1971), pp. 130–154.

92 *DC* I. 11 (h III, 57. 10–11).

93 *DC* I. 10 (h III, 50. 1–3).

94 See above pp. 13–14. The notion of a radical disjunction between the divine and human (based on the absence of proportion between the terms) which is frequent in Cusanus' writings from *De Docta Ignorantia* onwards has been much discussed. On its background in late medieval Nominalism, see H. A. Oberman, *Some Notes on the Theology of Nominalism with Attention to its Relation to the Renaissance*, "Harvard Theological Review", LIII, 1960, pp. 47–76. However, since Cusanus also depends on the Neoplatonic tradition in which disjunction/disproportion and continuity/proportion are balanced within the emanative theory, it is probably a mistake to emphasize the former aspect to the exclusion of the latter. This approach weakens the otherwise useful treatment of P. M. Watts, *Nicolaus Cusanus: A Fifteenth-Century Vision of Man* (Leiden, 1982), pp. 37–38, 56, 62–65, etc.

participating term) can traverse the **[38]** maximal and the infinite (as participated terms) without attaining the maximal and the infinite (as un-participated terms), although the opposing maxima and opposing infinites coincide on the higher plane of intellect.[95]

The treatise *De Coniecturis* expands the focus of the conjectural relation between truth and intellect beyond the simple contrast of divine and human in two ways. At the beginning of the prologue, a participatory relation of this kind is envisaged between one human being and another. Cusanus argues that there are with respect to the same inapprehensible truth "different and graduated" (*diversae..graduales*) or "disproportional" (*improportionabiles*) conjectures between different individuals, with the result that no individual will ever perfectly grasp another's meaning, although one individual perhaps comes closer to that meaning than does another.[96] Here, the disjunctive aspect of the conjectural relation is alone emphasized. In a later chapter, a similar participatory relation is posited between one mental faculty and another. Cusanus' explains that when reason conjectures on the assumption that all numbers are proportional but intellect rejects this conjecture by affirming that certain numbers are both proportional and disproportional, this reveals that intellect is the "precision of rational things" (*praecisio rationalium*) just as reason is the "precision of sense" (*praecisio sensus*) and truth itself the "precision of intellect" (*praecisio intellectus*).[97] Here, the conjunctive and disjunctive aspects of the conjectural relation are both underlined.

After describing the nature of conjecture in the preliminary terms summarized above, Cusanus proceeds in the first chapter of *De Coniecturis* to consider the origin of conjecture within the order of reality itself by comparing the intellectual production of real things by the divine mind with the intellectual production of rational things by the human mind – these latter corresponding to conjectures – and by identifying the production of rational things or the contemplation of such things with the human mind's participation **[39]** in the divine or its assimilation to the latter.[98] In his own words, this important passage runs as follows:

95 For the relation between the two kinds of maximum, see *DDI* I. 2 (h I, 7. 1–8. 17), I. 17–18 (h I, 35. 1–37. 10), II 1 (h I, 61. 1–65. 10), II. 4 (72. 23–75. 18), *DVS* 26 (h XII, 77. 1–16). For that between the two kinds of infinite see *DDI* II. 1 (h I, 61. 1–65. 10), II. 4 (h I, 72. 23–75. 18), *DVS* 26 (h XII, 74. 1–75. 16). For that between the two kinds of necessity, see *DDI* I. 3 (h I, 9. 21–28), I. 6 (h I, 13, 12–14. 21), II. 2 (66. 7–9). The theory of un-participated and participated as applied to the maximal and infinite is explored at length in the argument of *DC* I. 10 (h III, 47. 1)-11 (h III, 60. 6).

96 *DC* I, prol. (h III, 3. 1–7). Cf. *DC* I. 11 (h III, 54. 1–60. 6).

97 *DC* I. 10 (h III, 52. 7–53. 12). Cf. *DC* I. 6 (h III, 25. 1–26. 6).

98 The argument here should be compared with an analogous one at *DB* (h XI 1, 7. 1–8) (where the Hermetic teaching about man's status as a second god is quoted as the authority). Here, Cusanus compares God's creation of "real beings and natural forms (*entia realia . . . naturales formae*)" with man's creation of "rational beings and artificial forms (*rationalia entia . . . formae artificiales*)", the latter being similitudes of the former. Man's function is to measure his own intellect through the power of his works and thereby – as an image measures the truth – measure the divine intellect through the power of its works, this measuring knowledge being "enigmatic"

> It is necessary that conjectures proceed from our mind as the real world proceeds from the divine and infinite reason. For when the human mind – the lofty similitude of God – participates in the productiveness of the creative nature as much as possible, it produces from itself as from a similitude of the omnipotent form, rational things in the likeness of real things. Therefore, the human mind exists as the form of the conjectural world, just as the divine mind exists as the form of the real one. For this reason, just as that absolute divine being is everything that exists in any existent thing whatsoever, so also is the unity of the human mind the being of its conjectures. But God works all things for his own sake, so that he is both the intellectual beginning and the intellectual end of all things. Similarly, the unfolding of the rational world which proceeds from our mind enfolding it also takes place for its maker's sake. For the more subtly our mind contemplates in itself the world unfolded from itself, so much more abundantly is it quickened within itself. Its end is infinite reason in which alone it will contemplate itself as it is, this reason alone being the measure of reason for all things. And we are raised to greater assimilation with this reason to the extent that we will have made our mind more profound, this reason being the single vital center of our mind. For this reason, we strive after the sciences which perfect us with a natural desire.[99]

We could hardly summarize the extensive sequence of "demonstrative examples" (*apodigmatica exemplaria*) and "practical applications" (*applicatoria praxis*) constituting the main body of *De Coniecturis* within the **[40]** compass of the present essay. Although Cusanus points out that the formulation of conjectures represents a "concise method" (*brevis via*)[100] – a term having Dionysian, Boethian, and Lullian resonances[101] – he also reminds us that an endless production

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(*aenigmatica*). By replacing the conjectural forms of *DC* with the artificial forms of *DB*, Cusanus brings out the important practical and instrumental connotations of the notion of conjecture.

99 *DC* I. 1 (h III, 5. 1–20) "Coniecturas a mente nostra, uti realis mundus a divina infinita ratione, prodire oportet. Dum enim humana mens, alta dei similitudo, fecunditatem creatricis naturae, ut potest, participat, ex se ipsa ut imagine omnipotentis formae in realium entium similitudine rationalia exserit. Coniecturalis itaque mundi humana mens forma exstitit uti realis divina. Quapropter ut absoluta illa divina entitas est omne id quod est in quolibet quod est, ita et mentis humanae unitas est coniecturarum suarum entitas. Deus autem omnia propter se ipsum operatur, ut intellectuale sit principium pariter et finis omnium, ita quidem rationalis mundi explicatio a nostra complicante mente progrediens propter ipsam est fabricatricem. Quanto enim ipsa se in explicato a se mundo subtilius contemplatur, tanto intra se ipsam uberius fecundatur, cum finis ipsius ratio sit infinita, in qua tantum se, uti est, intuebitur, quae sola est omnibus rationis mensura. Ad cuius assimilationem tanto propinquius erigimur, quanto magis mentem nostram profundaverimus, cuius ipsa unicum vitale centrum exsistit. Ob hanc causam naturali desiderio ad perficientes scientias aspiramus".

100 See *DC* I. epist. (h III, 1. 15). The value of conciseness is stressed repeatedly in *De Possest.* See *DPo* (h XI 2, 23. 1–2, 54. 7–8, 57. 1–2), etc.

101 Both Dionysius (at *De Mystica Theologia* 3, 1033BC) and Boethius (at *Quomodo substantiae*, prol. 186. 1–187. 16) speak of the conciseness and obscurity of the highest theology, although by

of conjectures is possible.[102] We shall therefore turn to a later treatise in which certain conjectures obviously viewed by Cusanus as having particular usefulness are presented in what might be termed a historical-philosophical context.

The prologue to *De Venatione Sapientiae* outlines a project of recording for posterity various conjectures which the author has made in the course of hunting for wisdom, the inspiration for this being Diogenes Laertius' account of the pursuits of wisdom by ancient thinkers which he has recently read. Applying a method clearly somewhat influenced by Ramon Lull's combinatory art,[103] Cusanus divides up the earlier philosophers' and his own conjectures according to a set of quasi-spatial categories – produced by the superimposition of a set of three "regions" (*regiones*) upon a set of ten "fields" (*campi*) – and proceeds to evaluate with respect to each category whether the prey of wisdom may profitably be hunted and perhaps captured there.[104] The first three fields, occurring within the first region, are particularly important. The first field is that of *Docta Ignorantia* ("Learned Ignorance") and Cusanus notes that the superiority of non-knowledge over knowledge and of negation over affirmation found here alone make the pursuit of God's quiddity viable. Among the philosophers, only Plato had entered this field in expressing his surprise that God could be found and greater surprise that he could be proclaimed.[105] **[41]** The second field is that of the *Possest* ("Possible-Actual"). This is where God is actually whatever he can possibly be and, since he is before the distinction of actuality and possibility and of being and non-being and therefore contains everything that has been or will be, this is where God is Eternity.[106] Although none of the philosophers entered this field, since they assumed that everything either is or is not, one may now explore it in Cusanus' own *Trilogus* (i.e. his *De Possest*).[107] The third field is that of the *Non Aliud* ("Not-Other"). This

conciseness these two authors are referring to the restricted use of words and the limited set of axioms, respectively. On the Lullian notion of a "concise art" (*ars brevis*), see below.

102 See *DC* I, prol. (h III, 2. 5–6).

103 Cusanus' combinatory is similar to Lull's in being a similar fusion of the logical-rhetorical theory of topics and the theological doctrine of divine names, although it differs from its predecessor in employing the resulting categories within a markedly different kind of logical procedure The Lullian influence on Cusanus is also detectable in the use of letter-symbols for divine names (in *De Non Aliud*) and in the employment of the hunting analogy for philosophical activity (in *De Venatione Sapientiae*). See E. W. Platzeck, *Lullische Gedanken bei Nikolaus von Kues*, "Trierer theologische Zeitschrift," LXII, 1953, pp. 357–64 and E. Colomer, *Nikolaus von Kues und Raimund Llull. Aus Handschriften der Kueser Bibliothek* (Berlin, 1961).

104 The three regions correspond to eternal being, the perpetual similitude (of eternal being), and the temporal similitude (of eternal being). See *DVS* 11 (h XII, 31. 1–10). As the argument unfolds, the first region is correlated with six of the ten fields, the second and third regions with two of the ten fields each.

105 *DVS* 12 (h XII, 33. 19–21).

106 *Possest* has a trinitarian sense in the last analysis, since God is possibility, actuality, and the connection. See *DPo* (h XI 2, 47. 1–51. 22).

107 *DVS* 13 (h XII, 38. 1–12). Cusanus' explanation of the philosophers' failure reveals clearly the important connection between the *Possest* and the coincidence of opposites.

is where what is not defined by anything else, constitutes definition of itself, and defines other things – something that can be associated with God's unity through the term "Not Other"[108] – is accorded precedence over terms that enter into the usual system of definition through genus and species. Although none of the philosophers entered this field, since they assumed that negation is always opposed to affirmation, one may now explore it in Cusanus' own *Tetralogus* (i.e. his *De Non Aliud*).[109]

From a reading of these descriptions, it becomes clear that the Cardinal believed his teachings regarding the *Possest* and the *Non Aliud* to be innovations in the history of philosophy. Since he was undoubtedly correct in this judgment,[110] any discussion of Cusanus' singularity should include some comments on the leading ideas of the dialogues *De Possest* and *De Non Aliud*.

The textual authority to which the enigma[111] of *Possest* is explicitly attached is scriptural. This is represented by three statements in the Bible – that God is almighty, that God is being, and that God is enigmatic for us[112] – which Cusanus interprets as supplying three components of this invented **[42]** term: the infinitive verb *posse*, the third-person present indicative *est*, and the compound expression *posse* + *est*. However, the enigma of *Possest* is also implicitly associated with a textual authority which is philosophical. Thus, "to be able" (*posse*) may also have the technical sense of "potency" (*potentia*) while "it is" (*est*) may also have the technical sense of "actuality" (*actus*): terms suggesting the doctrines of motion and change expounded in Aristotle's writings or at least the writings of scholastic Aristotelians.

As an enigma, *Possest* is not a thing, a concept, or a (simple) word. That it rather constitutes what might be termed an "artificial verbal tool" is indicated by the analogy elaborated by Cusanus – on the basis of shared properties like being manufactured, forming the basis of a game, and having a symbolic function – between

108 That it can also be associated with God's trinity is shown by the expression "The Not-Other is not other than the Not-Other." Cf. *DNA* 5 (h XIII, 13. 14–15).

109 *DVS* 14 (h XII, 41. 10–24). The important connection between the *Non Aliud* and the coincidence of opposites emerges from Cusanus' explanation of the philosophers' error.

110 It is possible that Cusanus' development of the notion of enigma in his late works is influenced by Maimonides' interpretation of the Tetragrammaton (see *Dux Neutrorum* I. 62) a topic in which he had already shown interest in *De Docta Ignorantia*. See *DDI* I 24 (h I, 51. 19–26). In particular, the handling of the enigma of *Possest* by analyzing the word into its constituent letters recalls Maimonides' treatment of the Tetragrammaton by analyzing the sacred name in a similar manner. See *DPo* (h XI 2, 57. 1–22). Meister Eckhart: *Expositio libri Exodi* 19–20 had also followed Maimonides in drawing philosophical conclusions from a linguistic reflection the Tetragrammaton.

111 For *Possest* as enigma see *DPo* (h XI 2, 19. 26, 25. 1–2 and 58. 1). On this enigma see Beierwaltes, *Identität und Differenz*, pp. 21–25.

112 For the main scriptural citations see *DPo* (h XI 2, 1–4. 13) (*Romans* 1: 20), (h XI 2, 14. 1–15. 16) (*Exodus* 3: 14), etc. However, there are many more explicit and implicit biblical references scattered through the text.

Possest and a child's top.[113] As an artificial verbal tool, it performs a primarily hermeneutical function which is practical, individual, and temporal.[114] This is the manner in which it must be understood when Cusanus proceeds in the course of his dialogue *De Possest* to apply it in order to reveal things about God himself – that he is actually everything that he can possibly be[115] and that he is simultaneously mobile and static,[116] – about the Trinity – that it is possibility, actuality, and the connection,[117] – and about God as divine name – that he is the *x* (e.g. Beauty) which is actually everything that it can possibly be.[118]

It should be apparent from the argument of *De Possest* that the enigma concerned is a further manifestation of the coincidence of opposites.[119] However, it is important to realize that this represents no longer simply a "one-fold" of the (real +) conceptual sphere but also a one-fold of the (conceptual +) linguistic sphere.[120] The writer makes the situation abundantly clear when he emphasizes that the enigma of *Possest* unites a single concept (of infinitely meaningful content) with a compound word, and then illustrates this by unfolding, in a purely conceptual manner, the single concept into the simultaneity of possibility, actuality, and connection,[121] and also by unfolding, in a **[43]** purely linguistic manner, the compound word *Possest* into the three words *posse*, *possest*, and *esse* through the common letter *E*.[122]

The textural authority to which the enigma[123] of *Non Aliud* is explicitly attached is philosophical. This is represented by Aristotle's reference to the difficult question whether Unity and Being are "not other" (*non aliud*) than the substance of

113 For the analogy of the top see *DPo* (h XI 2, 18. 1–23. 25).

114 This is because *Possest,* according to the discussion in *De Venatione Sapientiae,* is a "conjecture". See also *DPo* (h XI 2, 5. 1–2).

115 *DPo* (h XI 2, 8. 1–11. 11 and 58. 5–6).

116 *DPo* (h XI 2, 19. 12–13, 21. 1–9 and 52. 1–19).

117 *DPo* (h XI 2, 6. 1–22, 47. 1–20, 51. 1–52. 17 and 57. 1–58. 6).

118 *DPo* (h XI 9. 10–13 and 10. 11–18).

119 See note 107 above.

120 I have introduced the term "one-fold" here in order to signify the inseparable unity-duality to which Cusanus frequently refers without assigning a name.

121 *DPo* (h XI 2, 47. 1–51. 22). Cf. *DPo* (h XI 2, 5. 1–7. 9).

122 *DPo* (h XI 2, 57. 1–22). The implied schema is *possE* + poss*Est* + *Esse*. It should be noted that Cusanus' dialogue assigns this interpretation not to the character of the "Cardinal" but to that of "Iohannes". Although this character is the least philosophically trained of the three interlocutors in the *Trilogus*, there is no doubt that Cusanus is himself advocating the method applied here because a. it is a principle applied throughout the text that the most humble things are often the best symbols (cf. *DPo* (h XII 2, 54. 6–7)), and b. because the character of the "Cardinal" unreservedly praises the interpretation as soon as it has been offered (*DPo* (h XII 2, 58. 1–2)). Although the issue of what one might term "hermeneutic distancing" is an important one in Cusanus' writing and very relevant to the present question, it is too complex to pursue here.

123 For *Non Aliud* as enigma, see *DNA* 5 (h XIII, 11. 35–12. 5). On this enigma see Beierwaltes, *Identität und Differenz*, pp. 15–18. There are several separate studies of *Non Aliud* including G. von Bredow, *Gott der Nichtandere*, "Philosophisches Jahrbuch" LXXIII, 1965–1966, pp. 15–22, E. Wyller, *Zum Begriff 'non aliud' bei Cusanus*, in *Nicolò Cusano agli inizi del mondo moderno*,

beings, or whether there is some "other" (*aliud*) subject that performs this function, for example, love or water.[124] However, the philosophical text to which the enigma of *Non Aliud* is explicitly attached really amounts to an *anti*-authority. This is because it is Aristotle's failure to grasp the meaning of what he has written – which can only be remedied by careful reading of his text together with the *inter*-texts of Plato, Dionysius, and Proclus – that provides the impetus towards the unfolding of his philosophical meaning by Cusanus. The relation between the enigma of *Non Aliud* and an *anti*-authority is, as we shall see, connected with the hermeneutical intensity of the enigma itself.[125]

Non Aliud is similar to the previous enigma in being neither a thing, nor a concept, nor a (simple) word. The analogy elaborated by Cusanus – on the basis of shared properties like being manufactured, being capable of reflecting light, and having a symbolic function – between *Non Aliud* and an optical lens indicates that this enigma also represents an "artificial verbal tool" in the sense defined earlier. As such an artificial verbal tool, it likewise performs a primarily hermeneutical function which is practical, individual, and temporal.[126] And it is likewise in this manner that it must be understood when Cusanus proceeds in the course of his dialogue *De Non Aliud* to employ it in order to reveal truths about the Trinity – that he is the not-other not other than **[44]** the not-other,[127] – about God as divine name – that he is the *x* (e.g. Being) that is not other than the *y* (e.g. Beauty) that he also is[128] – or about God's relation to the creature – that he is not other than the creature[129]

Careful examination of the argument in *De Non Aliud* shows that the enigma concerned is a further manifestation of the coincidence of opposites. Again, it is necessary to understand that this represents no longer simply the "one-fold" of the (real +) conceptual sphere but also the one-fold of the (conceptual +) linguistic sphere.[130] Cusanus leaves us in no doubt about this situation when he emphasizes that the enigma of *Non Aliud* unites a single concept (of infinite semantic plenitude) with two words, and then illustrates this by unfolding, in a purely conceptual manner, the single concept into the simultaneities of sameness and difference[131] and of conjunction and disjunction,[132] and also by unfolding, in a purely linguistic manner the two words *non aliud* into the two words *non aliquid* through the common letters *A* and *D*.[133]

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pp. 427–429, W. Beierwaltes, *Cusanus und Proklos. Zum neuplatonischen Ursprung des non-aliud*, in *Nicolò Cusano agli inizi del mondo moderno*, pp. 137–140.

124 Aristotle: *Metaphysica* B 3, 996a.

125 See pp. 44–45.

126 This is because *Non Aliud* is a "conjecture" according to *De Venatione Sapientiae*.

127 *DNA* 5 (h XIII, 12. 15–27).

128 *DNA* 6 (h XIII, 13. 22–15. 7) and 20 (h XIII, 48. 29–49. 27).

129 *DNA* 6 (h XIII, 13. 22–15. 7).

130 See note 120.

131 *DNA* 5 (h XIII, 11. 6–28), 7 (h XIII, 15. 14–30), and 22 (h XIII, 52. 14–53. 4).

132 *DNA* 7 (h XIII, 16. 15–22).

133 *DNA* 17 (h XIII, 43. 12–15). Obviously, the negative prefix is also a common element.

Non Aliud is different from the previous enigma in important ways. These differences might best be expressed through a formula: "*Non Aliud* represents a hermeneutic folding which is the basis of the concept of identity". That *Non Aliud* is a folding is shown especially by Cusanus' statement that the not-other is not other than the other, *i.e.* that the not-other is both one of two opposites and the relation between these opposites.[134] Its relation to the hermeneutic is indicated by the expression of the not-other in the dialogue *De Non Aliud* primarily as encounter between the reader and his philosophical texts – especially Aristotle, Dionysius, and Proclus – and between the different philosophical texts themselves.[135] The notion of "being the basis of" becomes a major theme of the dialogue explored in terms of Dionysius' doctrine of priority. **[45]** Here, we learn that a priority can be conceived not only within the temporal sphere but between the non-temporal and temporal spheres.[136] That *Non Aliud* is the basis of identity is shown particularly by Cusanus' statements that the not-other is imitated by the "this" (*hoc*) and by "the same" *(idem*), that it defines itself, and that it is approached through tautology.[137] Its relation to the conceptual is indicated by the conclusion drawn from the discussion of Proclus that *Non Aliud* itself cannot be conceived although it is also whatever is conceived: an extension of the usual alternation of negation and affirmation in divine-name theory from concept *x* to concept as such.[138] That *Non Aliud* could not be expressed through a reversal of the formula as a "concept of identity which is the basis of hermeneutic folding" follows from its conjectural status as hermeneutic, practical and individual.[139] For these reasons, it is undoubtedly the most singular element in Cusanus' thought.

134 *DNA* 7 (h XIII, 16. 21–22) and 22 (h XIII, 52. 19–22). The duality implicit in the folding is also represented, on the linguistic level, by the duality of the verbal expression *non* + *aliud* – a very unusual case of an *affirmative* divine name which is not expressed in a single word. The enigma of *Possest* does not have this property.

135 The importance of the textual basis is shown by the association of the interlocutors with specific texts: "Ferdinand" with Aristotle, "Peter" with Proclus' *Theologia Platonis*, "the Abbot" with Plato's *Parmenides* and Proclus' *Commentarius in Parmenidem*, and "Nicholas" with Dionysius. See *DNA* 1 (h XIII, 3. 1–9).

136 *DNA* 14–17 (h XIII, 29. 8–43. 32).

137 *DNA* 5 (h XIII, 13. 13–14) and 9 (h XIII, 19. 23–32). The notion that the "not-other" is prior to the "same" is a particularly important one for Cusanus who is thereby able to maintain – against pantheistic misunderstandings of his thought – that God is not other than the world although he is not the same as the world. Cf. *DVS* 14 (h XII, 39. 1–41. 24).

138 *DNA* 20 (h XIII, 49. 16–21). The enigma of *Possest* does not have this property, given that it represents such determinate concepts such as potentiality, actuality, and being.

139 On this definition of conjecture, see pp. 35–36.

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